

16 215.  
Christs Counsel  
TO HIS *E. 10. 26*  
**CHURCH.**  
IN TWO  
SERMONS

Preached at the  
**Two Last Fasts,**

ONE



APRIL xi. MDCLXXIX.

THE OTHER

DECEMBER xxii. MDCLXXX.

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By *SYMON PATRICK*, D.D.  
DEAN of *PETERBURGH*, and Chaplain  
in Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

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L O N D O N,  
Printed by *J. Macock*, for *R. Royston*, Bookseller  
to His Most Sacred Majesty. 1681,

669:90



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TO THE  
Right Honourable  
**WILLIAM**  
EARL of BEDFORD,  
Knight of the Most Noble Order  
of the GARTER, &c.

My very good LORD and PATRON.

MY LORD,

**B**eing desired by some in my Parish to print  
the Sermon I preached on the last Fast-day,  
I found it necessary to prefix to it the Ser-  
mon I preacht the Fast before; because this depends  
on that: and have presumed to prefix Your Lordships  
Name to both; because it is by Your Favour and  
Patronage, that I preached either the one or the other  
in that Place.

The matter of them is suitable to the occasion:  
For in the First I have chiefly pressed the General Re-  
medy of all the evils under which we labour; in the

## The Epistle Dedicatory.

Second one Particular Remedy; and in both exposed the wickedness of Popery. But I have shown withal, that all we say against it, will not keep it out: unless we will so duly prize our own Religion, as to live according to it: Which being in the general allowed, even by those who continue to live quite contrary, I see no reason why any Body should quarrel with what I have said, about one particular Duty of our Religion: unless they think that we have nothing to answer for, upon the account of our contempt of Christs Ministers, and of that Order which He hath appointed in His Church; which seems to me such a dangerous sin, that I could not think I discharged a good Conscience, if at such a time and such an occasion, I took no notice of it.

Wherein I do not plead our own Cause, as some are wont to object to such Discourses, but the Cause of Christ and of His Religion: which now lyes a bleeding, and we fear a dying, by the wounds we give it our selves, through the subtile Contrivance of our Romish Adversaries. Whose Plots have been many and horrid; but their first and greatest strength (as appears by the directions given to their Emissaries) lay in this, To bring the whole Ministry of the Church of England into contempt; and to divide the People from their established Pastors, into a great many little Bodies, under no Government but what they themselves pleased. And it is apparent, that by the same Popish artifice, this poisonous conceit is industriously infused into

## The Epistle Dedicatory.

into the peoples mind; that we are looking towards Rome; if we do but tell them, that they ought not to form opinions as they think good, but guide themselves in their judgement by our direction.

But I hope the better sort are not ignorant; by this time, of their devices: and that though there be some in the Ministry who are not so fit as they should be, to direct and guide their Flocks; yet they will consider, that the men who most complain of it are such; as will be guided by none at all; no not by those whose ability and honesty cannot be suspected. And it is a very great Truth also, that their intemperate Speeches against the Clergy, is the thing that hath frighted the weaker sort of them into such an apprehension of danger from those men; as hath made them guilty of the follies which have done great injury to us all.

This, My Lord, is the grief of all good Men among us, who consider the state we are in; and desire the safety, or have any love for the honour; of our Religion. For we seem now to be in such a condition as Gregory Nyssen describes in his days: when things were come to such a pass, that the people neither understood themselves, from their own inward sense, what was fit for them, nor would believe those that rightly informed them. No, saith he \*, We are exceeding angry at our Teachers; and very hardly bear their admonitions: their counsels are a grie-

\* Tom. 2. p.

745. *τὸν τοῦ*

*ἀρχιεπισκόπου τοῦ*

*ἐπισκοπικοῦ.*

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## The Epistle Dedicatory.

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## The Epistle Dedicatory.

vance; and their instruction in good things, we nauseate, as sick men do the medicines which their Physicians exhibite to them. If a reproof be given, we take it heavily; if we hear a rougher word, we fall into a rage; if we be thrust out of the Church, we blaspheme. This is not the disposition of Learners, nor the obedience of Disciples: but the ambitious contention of seditious and rebellious people. For a Scholar, who desires to learn any common Art or Science, ought to be like a little Child: much more ought he to be like a sucking Infant, who would be instructed in Christian piety; because our Lord hath honoured that Age, as apt to receive impressions, with his commendation.

Now no Child rises up against the Characters and the Lineaments, that his Master makes for him in Wax; nor devises new Elements, by a frantick Licence innovating about making Letters; but exercises his hand after his Masters Copy, and both in word and deed imitates what his Director delivers to him, &c. But a Christian doth not thus; though he hath heard, *That except ye be converted and become like little Children, ye cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*: but when the Priest severely corrects his errour, openly contradicts; and mutters between his teeth;  
and



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and going round the Streets, and the places of publick concourse, rails and reviles; and (as it follows a little after) sits judging even me the Bishop in the Chair of the Scorners.

Now what can the end of such things be, but utter confusion? Which necessarily follows, when the unity that ought to be between the Pastors and people is quite dissolved; or the people (some upon one account, some upon another) lose all their respect for them, and love to them for their works sake.

There hath been much speech, Your Lordship knows, of a Prophecy (as it is called) of Bishop Usher, late Primate of Armagh; which hath very much startled many, and made them fear dreadful things: Though the certainty of it hath not been so publicly attested, as that which I have been bold to set down in the first of these Sermons. Where Your Lordship will find something that looks like a sad Prediction; which an excellent Divine and holy Man of this Church published long ago, in a Book of his upon the Creed. Which I wish were diligently heeded and laid to heart: because it directs to the way, whereby the threatening may be avoided; pointing to the very sin that deserves the Judgment he denounces. Which if it be slighted, when we are told of it; it will be one of the worst signs that can be, his Prognostication will prove true and be fulfilled.

But they who are appointed to stand on the Watch-Tower,

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Towre, and give notice of danger, have delivered their own Souls; when they have faithfully declared the mind of Christ in this matter. Which was the greatest motive I had both to preach and to print these Sermons; which I am sure will be acceptable to Your Lordship: not only because you have a due respect to Gods Ministers; but because I present them as a token of my gratitude, and of the honour I have for Your Lordship, being

My LORD,

Your most humble Servant,

S. PATRICK.



A  
**SERMON**  
PREACHED  
ON THE  
**FAST-DAY,**  
APRIL xi. MDCLXXIX.

REVEL. II. 16.

*Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and  
I will fight against them with the sword of my  
mouth.*

**W**HAT our Saviour had said un-  
to the *Jews* before his death,  
(in the Second Lesson for this  
Morning Prayer) *xiii. Luke 3, 5. Except ye  
repent, ye shall all likewise perish; He saith here  
(in effect) after his ascension to Heaven, unto  
the Gentile Christians, Repent, or else I will come  
quickly, and will fight against them with the sword  
of my mouth.*

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This is a Lesson for all Nations, and for all Ages : in which the Church of *England* is as much concerned now, as the Church of *Pergamus* was then. Though this Letter was not particularly directed unto us, no more than to the rest of the Christian World ; yet the next words tell us, that our Lord expects every body should take notice of it, consider it, and take warning by it, as much as if it had been addressed to them by name, ver. 17. *He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.* We all herein read our own doom ; and ought to understand the words as if our Lord had enlarged them in such a general Admonition, as he gives in another case about watching, xiii. Mark ult. *And what I say unto the Church of Pergamus, I say unto all, Repent.*

*Repent, or else I will come quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*

In which words you may easily discern, An *Exhortation* to a most necessary Duty, which is, *To repent* : and a *Commination* in case the *Exhortation* be not obeyed ; which is, A denunciation of war against such obstinate Offenders, who provoke him to sharpen

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sharpen against them, the sword of his mouth.

The Exhortation is so frequently pressed, and as frequently explained, that I cannot think it fit to spend the time in telling you what it is to *repent*. For you all know well enough, that it is such a godly sorrow for what we have done amiss, as makes us not only afflict our selves for our sins, but utterly renounce and forsake them.

If you know your Baptismal Vow (as who is there that can be unacquainted with it, unless he affect a stupid and brutish ignorance) it is easie to understand that nothing less than this can pass with God for Repentance.

If we had never broken that Vow, there would have been no need of Repentance; which is the repairing of that breach, and the making it up again. And how shall we make all whole; but only by observing that Vow better, which we have violated and broken? No man of sense can think, there is any other way of being reconciled to God after we have offended him; but only by becoming more dutiful to him: Performing, that is, those engagements which we always

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had to him, and from which we can never be absolved; because, beside our natural obligation, we have tyed and bound our selves by a solemn and most sacred Vow, to be his faithful Servants. When we do not keep this Vow we sin, and bring a heavy guilt upon our selves. From which sin and guilt, if we would be freed, we must *Repent*: that is, keep our Vow better; forsaking the Devil, and all his works; heartily believing God's holy Word; and obediently keeping his Commandments. If we be truly sorrowful and afflicted that we have not done thus; in which Repentance begins: we must resolve and seriously endeavour to make this our business hereafter; in which Repentance ends and is completed.

I shall say no more in so plain a business; which hath been urged upon you a thousand times: not by one alone, but by all God's Ministers that ever you heard preach about it. And what Theme is there more common, that comes oftner into the Pulpits? I wish the perpetual sound of it without due regard, have not made it become so ineffectual, that now men turn a deaf ear to such Discourses,

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Discourses, as beaten and thredbare Subjects; to which they need not give any attendance. But if any man have an ear still open; let him *hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches*, here in this Book. Let him hear, at least, what a desperate course he runs, if he continue to neglect a Duty which is so well known, that he thinks he need not hear of it any more. For our Saviour threatens such as would not repent, that he would *come unto them quickly, and fight against them with the sword of his mouth.*

The first Motive you know to a change, is commonly an apprehension of the danger of that course, wherein a man is at present engaged. This is apt to put a stop unto him in his way, and bring him to a stand. The very first sight of it, when it smites his Soul, is wont to repress the violence and heat wherewith he pursues his sinful desires. A new scene of thoughts begin to appear in his mind: and he is led to consider with himself, *Whither am I going? What mischief is this which threatens me? Whither will this course carry me? and what will be the end of these things?* And if the danger be very great and pressing;

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sing; and his apprehension of it also be great and proportionable to the danger; this strikes the greater fear and dread into his Soul. And fear of what will insue, disposes him to a change and alteration of his course of life; that he may escape those miseries which he sees he is drawing upon himself. Especially if he be perswaded (as you have often heard) that no terrours or affrightments, no entreaties or prayers, no crys or tears, no sadness or affliction of Spirit, no outward humiliation or abasements, no purposes, no promises will prevail for his deliverance from that danger; without an effectual reformation and forsaking those wicked ways, that necessarily lead to death and destruction.

And it is no hard matter, one would think, for men to convince themselves of this Truth. For suppose you were in a journey, and you should be told of, nay should see, a great Pit or Precipice, to which, and no whither else, that Road did directly lead; would you think of any other means to avoid it, but only by turning into another path? Though you should quiver and tremble like a Leaf when it is shaken with the Wind; though



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though you should conceive the greatest  
horror, and offer never so many Prayers  
and Vows; nay though you turned your fa-  
ces about, and looked the contrary way;  
yet if still you should proceed and go for-  
ward in that Road, you would most certain-  
ly hurle your selves (though you turn'd your  
backs of it, and were loth to see it) into in-  
evitable ruine. This is exactly the case of  
every Sinner; who, besides that his way is  
uneasie and rugged, putting him to a great  
deal of pain, and costing him many a fall,  
hath the Pit of Hell, a bottomless Pit of de-  
struction, which burns with Fire and Brim-  
stone, set evidently before his eyes: Nay, is  
manifestly destroying his Body, his Estate,  
his Reputation; and which is more, is  
link'd in a wicked society with those, that by  
their riot and luxury, prophaneness and irre-  
ligion, neglect of all things but their sottish  
pleasures, are bringing the Countrey where-  
in they live to utter ruine; putting, as I may  
say, an ancient Kingdom and famous Church  
into most lamentable confusion; in the midst  
of which they are all like to perish. It is  
a foolish thing for any of them to imagine  
they can avoid it, because perhaps they  
sometimes

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sometimes dread it, and shiver at the thoughts of it; because they cry to Heaven when they see the danger, to deliver them from it; or at every step, suppose, fall down on their faces, and humble themselves, beseeching God to rescue them from this ruine: nay, put on Sackcloth (though alas! who is there now that is so religious?) and roll themselves in dust and ashes. If when they get up again, they still go on, and will not forsake their evil way, Heaven it self cannot preserve them from destruction, having appointed that fearful end for such obstinate, refractory Sinners; who will not be saved, unless he make the Fire not to burn, and the Sea not to drown: that is, alter the very nature of things, for the sake of those that deserve so ill of him.

Hoping therefore that, every one of you being convinced of this, the representation of the danger of impenitency will, at least, move you to design and begin a change of your lives, I shall treat of that at this time; which is the *second* part of my Text: wherein our Blessed Lord threatens, that unless the Church of *Pergamus* repented, he would *come quickly to her, and fight against them with the sword of his mouth.* Which



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Which words contain in them these IV. Considerations, to stir us up to repentance.

I. First, That if men do not amend their lives, especially after many warnings, clear convictions, and a change wrought in their minds and judgments, it turns the greatest kindness of God into anger and displeasure.

II. That it wearies the very patience and long-suffering of God: to which we are more indebted than we imagine; and should it forsake us, our condition is left very woful.

III. To such persons the most gracious God becomes an enemy.

IV. And accordingly they must expect nothing but the execution of all his threatnings against them.

How all these arise out of the words, will appear in the handling of them.

I.  
First, I say, That not to amend after God hath often called and perswaded us to it, nay convinced us of the necessity of it, turns his greatest kindness into anger and displeasure. If there be no change wrought in your lives,

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you shall find a sad change in his proceedings, and the methods of his Providence towards you. This I gather from that Phrase, *I will come unto thee.*

*Come unto thee?* What better News can there be than this (would one think) if he read no further? What more welcome Guest can we have than God himself? who is wont in these terms to express his tender love and kindness towards Sinners. This is the thing that we pray for and entreat, That the Lord would be pleased to be so gracious as to come to our souls. And it is very true; this is the first signification of the Phrase, which declares his Grace and favour, whereby he is moved to begin a kind Treaty with us: suing unto us and beseeching us that he may have our affections; and that we will not dispose of them to any one else but him, that loves us with so much tenderness.

But then behold! what obstinate impenitency doth. It puts a stop to these proceedings, and turns the course of Divine Providence another way. It changes all this love and good will, into anger, displeasure and jealousy. His *coming* now signifies quite another thing; His appearing is dreadful;  
His

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His presence is frightful, and astonishing: for He comes on another business; not to bless, but to curse; not to bestow favours, but to punish and execute vengeance.

There is a double *coming* of God our Saviour: One with Offers and Tenders of Mercy; the other with a Rod in his hand to chastise our contempt and abuse of the mercy offered. They that will not receive him in the former way, shall be forced to receive him in the latter. Though they may refuse and reject his Grace; they shall not be able to defend themselves from the effects of his heavy displeasure.

The very name of our Blessed Saviour, if you observe it, was <sup>o</sup> *Ερχομενος*. He that cometh, xi. Matt. 3. And what did he come for? He himself tells you what his first business was, x. John 10. I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. But when (as he complains) men would not come unto him, that they might have life, v. John 40. when He came unto his own, and his own received him not, i. John 11. Then you hear of another sadder coming of his, i. Revel. 7. Behold, he cometh with Clouds, and every eye shall see him, (even they that shut their eyes before, and in

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their blind rage pierced him, and wounded him to death as a Malefactor) and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.

His coming at the first is to invite us to come unto him, xi. Matth. 28. where you may read how he expects that all those Souls which groan under their sins, and complain of the heavy load of them, all those who sigh that they have committed them, should be weary of them and throw off the burthen; take another course, and come to submit themselves to the yoke of his holy Laws. But if they will not be perswaded to this, all their entreaties will never perswade him to save them. His heart will be turned against them; and He would have us mark how much he is displeased at them, what a change and wonderful alteration there is in his design upon them. For Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute Judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly Sinners have spoken against him, Jude 14, 15.

And thus the word visit in Scripture is differently used: Sometimes for Gods bringing his

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his blessings to those, to whom he is said to come; and sometimes for his laying his stripes on the back of those Fools, that were insensible of his love. I need not name the places, some of which I alledged the last Day of Fasting and Prayer: And I make mention of all this only to this purpose, That you may see what the effect of impenitency is. If you will not change, God will. Not himself indeed, for He was always thus resolved, but his dealings with you: which you shall not find so favourable to you as they have been. He will not always wait to be so gracious as he is at present; for He is not insensible of all the affronts, that impudent Sinners put upon Him. He will take another course, since they will not; and meet them, as you shall hear presently, after another manner than he was wont to do: making them know what it is to abuse the goodness of their gracious God.

You would have him indeed, to change his Laws for your sakes; nay to change Himself, and go back with his Word: to love those sins which he cannot but hate, and pardon that, which he hath told you he will punish: a change which is impossible to be made.

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made. But another change, every man that goes on still in his trespasses, shall find to his cost: a change which he would by no means suffer, but which God hath purposed and decreed and will not repent; which is, that He will not always strive with men in so much love, but make Himself known to them in another way, in tokens of his anger and wrath.

And that now would lead me to the *Second* thing: only before we leave this, let us a little seriously consider it. Have you so much reason to love your sins, that rather than change your lives, you care not though God turn his loving kindness into displeasure? After your sins have turned the World upside down, and made it such a confused and uncomfortable place as we now find it, do you not care though they reach up unto Heaven, and make still a greater alteration there, to our utter destruction? Is it of no concernment, in what manner God comes to visit you? Is it all one whether he clothe himself with wrath and put on vengeance, or come as a Friend, and make affectionate addresses to your Souls? Would you have Him that used to knock at the door of your hearts, de-  
firing



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firing to come in, and entertain you with feſtival joys; break in upon you with a dreadful violence, and fill you with the terrours of the Lord, with an amazed Conſcience, with benumbing fears, with ghastly apprehenſions of the wrath to come, with the beginnings of Hell fire; and that not to turn but to torment you?

Or can you be content that He ſhould come againſt this ſinful Nation, *to break down what He hath built up, and to pluck up that which he hath planted,* as Jeremiah ſpeaks of his Country, xlv. 4. ? Or would it be as welcome a ſound as any other to hear ſuch a Cry as that in the Prophet Joel, ii. 1. *The day of the Lord cometh, it is nigh at hand, a day of darkneſs and gloomineſs, a day of clouds and of thick darkneſs?* wherein he will come to laſh us with the ſevereſt ſcourge of all other, for the abuſe of the light of his glorious Goſpel, for the deſpiſal of his Meſſengers, and our ſlighting all his benefits, and continuing incorrigible under his Judgments.

O do not preſume that you ſhall never ſee ſuch a diſmal time, becauſe he hath not yet made you ſo miſerable. Do not put away far from you this evil day; nor imagine you ſhall

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shall always hear nothing but his kind invitations and his loving entreaties, his good motions and his gracious promises : if you will not be perswaded by them to turn unto Him; He will turn away from you and set himself against you ; He will not always strive in vain with you, but resolve at last (though much against his first design) to abandon such stiffnecked Sinners, and pronounce such a Sentence on them as that in the Prophet, i. *I-sai. 24. Ah, I will ease me of mine Adversaries, and avenge me of mine Enemies.* And that is the next Consideration.

II.

A continued course of sin, doth in conclusion weary the patience and tire the long-suffering of our most merciful and indulgent Lord and Master. For He says here in my Text, *I will come unto thee QUICKLY.* There is a time when he will bear no longer, but bring the Controversie to a speedy issue; in the ruine and destruction of those that oppose him.

Now though there are many signs mentioned in Scripture of an approaching ruine; yet I shall name but *two*. The *first* is, When Men

Men have been not only often rebuked for their sins, but convinced of their guilt and danger, and have had their hearts set against them, and yet will not amend. For which we have the known Maxim of the Wise Man, xxix. Prov. 1. *He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.* This is a mortal mark upon that person: A token of a plague of the heart so incurable, that nothing is to be expected but a sudden death. Which will seize on such men, if not presently, yet on a sudden, as to them; in a moment, when they look not for it; but think themselves in peace and safety. Thus it was in the days of Noah; and thus it was at our Saviours coming to destroy his Crucifiers; and thus we see it oftentimes with our eyes, or hear of it with our ears, that the confident and the merry Sinner is in an instant cut off, and goes down into the Pit.

But *secondly*, The condition of impenitent persons is never more dangerous, than when they remain unreformed, after many punishments have been inflicted on them, by divers strokes of the Rod of God. Which seems to be supposed in those words of our Saviour, in his Letter to the last of these Churches, iii. Rev. 19. *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be*

zealous therefore and repent. As if he had said, When I would do good to mens souls, as long as I have any hope of them, I correct and afflict them; that I may reduce them to obedience. It concerns you therefore highly to stir up your selves to repent in good earnest of those sins, for which you have smarted much already: for there are no means to be used after these, but you must perish, if they do not prevail upon your hearts. And this reason the Prophet *Isaiah* gives of the utter desolation which was coming upon *Israel*, ix. *Isai.* 13, 14. For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts. Therefore the Lord will cut off from *Israel* head and tail, branch and rush in one day. To which many places might be added out of the Prophet *Jeremiah*; but one shall suffice, vii. *Jer.* 27, 28. Therefore thou shalt speak these words unto them, but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call upon them, but they will not answer thee. But thou shalt say unto them, This is a Nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth. That is to say, It is to no purpose to speak to them any more. Thou mayest preach and bestow thy labour upon them; but there will be no fruit of it. And therefore all that I have further to command thee,

thee, is to pronounce this Judgment upon them; that they are a people, who will not be moved to their duty, either by my word, or by my correction; and therefore I give them over, as having no hope they will ever be reclaimed. *Cut off thy hair, O Jerusalem* (in token of mourning, that is,) *and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the Lord hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.* So it follows there, ver. 29. to the terrour of future Generations, who should read this doleful Sentence upon those who had once been very dear to God; but were now, by reason of their obstinate wickedness, become good for nothing but to be made examples to all posterity, of his forest displeasure.

And now, my Brethren, what do you think, when you bring these things nearer home? Are neither of these signs and tokens of speedy vengeance, to be found upon the Sinners of this Nation? Or rather do we not see both these marks of our Lords coming quickly to reckon with us, for our abuse of his long patience and forbearance of us? Have you not been often reproved, and felt the light of God pierce into your very hearts? Hath He not made you see the evil of your ways; and so powerfully bowed and enclined your wills towards Him, as to

zealous therefore and repent. As if he had said, When I would do good to mens souls, as long as I have any hope of them, I correct and afflict them; that I may reduce them to obedience. It concerns you therefore highly to stir up your selves to repent in good earnest of those sins; for which you have smarted much already: for there are no means to be used after these, but you must perish, if they do not prevail upon your hearts. And this reason the Prophet *Isaiah* gives of the utter desolation which was coming upon *Israel*, ix. *Isai.* 13, 14. For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts. Therefore the Lord will cut off from *Israel* head and tail, branch and rush in one day. To which many places might be added out of the Prophet *Jeremiah*; but one shall suffice, vii. *Jer.* 27, 28. Therefore thou shalt speak these words unto them, but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call upon them, but they will not answer thee. But thou shalt say unto them, This is a Nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth. That is to say, It is to no purpose to speak to them any more. Thou mayest preach and bestow thy labour upon them; but there will be no fruit of it. And therefore all that I have further to command thee,



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And now, my Brethren, what do you think, when you bring these things nearer home? Are neither of these signs and tokens of speedy vengeance, to be found upon the Sinners of this Nation? Or rather do we not see both these marks of our Lords coming quickly to reckon with us, for our abuse of his long patience and forbearance of us? Have you not been often re-proved, and felt the light of God pierce into your very hearts? Hath He not made you see the evil of your ways; and so powerfully bowed and enclined your wills towards Him; as to

make you resolve to become better men? Hath he not also humbled this Nation by his mighty hand; and sent more Plagues than one to call us to repentance? First, He made us sigh and groan under the miseries of a war; and then under those of a sore Pestilence, which quickly, and as in a moment, smote down thousands of us, and laid them in their Graves. After which a dreadful Fire quickly followed, which was attended with that most disgraceful attempt, which our Enemies made upon our Ships, the Bulwarks of this Land: and with many calamities since of another sort, which have almost dissolved the Bonds of Society; and destroyed that mutual confidence which ought to be between our Prince and his people; and endangered our Religion and Liberties; and brought us into such a condition, that we scarce know which way to extricate our selves out of those perplexities, in which our sins have intangled us.

What should every one of us then do, who still survive the War, the Plague, and all the rest of Gods Judgments, but speed our repentance and amendment of life? You may think, perhaps, that the danger is now over, after so many punishments: but in truth there is greater danger than ever, if you still go on to provoke the  
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the Lord to jealousie. For what should He do with a people, but cast them off, who will not be turned, no not by such a mighty hand and outstretched arm, from their wicked courses? What our Saviour saith concerning those whom Pilate slew together with their Sacrifices, and on whom the Tower in Siloam fell, [*Suppose ye, that those Galileans were Sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things; or those eighteen the greatest Sinners in Jerusalem, because the Tower fell on them, and killed them, &c. xiii. Luke 1, 2, 3.*] the same may I say to you with a small alteration: Think you that those men who were slain in the late wars, were Sinners above all the people of *England*, because they were cut off, and left you alive? *I tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye shall also perish.* Or those eighty or ninety thousand that fell by the Plague, think you that they were Sinners above all men that dwelt in *London* and *Westminster*? *I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall also perish.* The time will come, when you shall also be called to an account for your impenitency; if you still go on in it: and who knows how near that time may be? In all likelihood, it will come the more speedily, if we take no warning neither by Gods Word, nor by his Rod. Therefore I beseech you quickly,  
before

before it be too late, to hearken to that voice, which saith, *Return, return, O ye backsliding Children.* If ever you mean to return, return now unto me, saith the Lord: and if you will put away your abominations out of my sight, then shall you be settled in peace and prosperity.

Consider that Parable which St. *Luke* there adds, and read a description of your own condition, *vers.* 6, 7, 8. You are a people planted as in a Garden of God; whose Gospel is not only come to you, but hath stayed long with you. He hath taken great care of you; and hath dressed and pruned you, that you might bring forth the fruit, which the knowledge of Christ ought to produce. Many showers of his Grace have fallen upon you; and you have long felt the warm beams of the Sun of righteousness, to make you fruitful. And therefore, think also with your selves, that He hath come many years *seeking fruit*; and expecting to see some good grow out of all this care and cost of his love. But alas! what hath He found when He came to visit you? May He not complain, as He doth there, *I have come these three years* (or rather, *one three year after another, many times told over*) *seeking fruit, and find none?* Is it not a wonder then that He hath not pronounced

ced the Sentence upon us, which there follows ;  
*Cut them down, why cumber they the ground ? Is it*  
*not the greater wonder, seeing so many others*  
*have had this heavy doom passed upon them ?*  
*O admire at the patient and long-suffering kind-*  
*ness of God, which hath interposed on your be-*  
*half, and moved Him to let you alone both that*  
*year, and this year also. First, In that year ;*  
*I mean that fatal year of cutting down, and ca-*  
*sting out of the Vineyard : when so many*  
*thousands perished in the late dreadful mortali-*  
*ty. And now I may adde in this year also, this*  
*remarkable year ; when the Axe was in a man-*  
*ner, laid to the root of the Tree : Our Ene-*  
*mies, I mean, had laid a deep Design, strongly*  
*grounded, and closely carried on, to cut us off*  
*and destroy both root and branch ; and, for*  
*any thing we know, in one day. For that there*  
*now is, and hath been for divers years last past,*  
*a horrid and treasonable Plot and Conspiracy, contri-*  
*ved and carried on by those of the Popish Religion, for*  
*the murdering of his Majesties Sacred Person, and*  
*for subverting the Protestant Religion, and the ancient*  
*and established Government of this Kingdom ; is be-*  
*come now, in effect, the sense of the whole Nati-*  
*on : the Lords and Commons in Parliament as-*  
*sembled having declared, in a Resolve of theirs,*  
*nemine contradicente (upon March 25. last past)*  
*that:*

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that they are fully satisfied, by the proofs they have heard, of the truth of it.

And considering their industrious endeavours to conceal it, even now that it is discovered, (whereas in reason, they should be the most zealous of all other men, were they innocent, to have it thoroughly examined) their strong Confederacies and stedfast Combinations, their many Oaths of secrecy, and obstinate resolution to stick to the Design and to each other; it is a wonder that it hath not been effected, and that sudden destruction hath not come upon us, as pain upon a Woman in travail.

But let us not content our selves merely with admiration of his amazing Providence over us, which hath prolonged a while (we know not for how long or short a time) the season of Grace unto us; let us not presume to abuse this patience (for so we are to esteem it, not a perfect deliverance) nor be so foolish as to imagine that it will last always: but think with our selves rather, that *the Lord of the Vineyard* may, it is possible, have resolved, after *this* year, or in some short space, after this new Husbandry of his, and such extraordinary pains and care to save us, that we shall be cut down indeed, if we will not bring forth fruit worthy of the Gospel. And therefore, looking upon this as  
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the day, wherein you may know and improve the things belonging to your peace, *be zealous*, as our Lord exhorts, *and repent*: be quick and speedy, active and diligent in this weighty business, now in this your day, lest you never have such an opportunity again, but miserably perish in your sins.

Consider, I beseech you; do you not pray to God continually (if you have any sense of Religion) that He would quickly dissipate all our fears; by laying more and more open, and then utterly defeating all the wicked contrivances of our enemies against us? Do you not think that He stays very long, before He bring to light the very bottom of the Plot; and make their Treasons so visible to all the World, that none may be able to gainsay it? Do you not think there is reason to tremble (when you seriously reflect upon it) to see in what a lamentable, unsettled and naked condition we are; in danger to be over-run with Foreign Enemies, should they make an attempt upon us? Are you not all therefore ready to say, *Lord, make haste to help us! make no tarrying, O our God! O my Beloved, say the same to your selves; for there is the stop. Labour and prevail with your own Souls, that they would make haste, that they would make no tarrying: but instantly turn to*  
E God,

God, in works meet for repentance; that so both his present Judgments may be removed, and worse prevented.

I know nothing that can hinder the entertainment of this reasonable motion, unless it be this, That men see there is not always such a speedy course taken with Sinners, and therefore they presume God will still bear with them. For they themselves have lived and sinned many years, and have escaped many dangers: and though they have been affrighted sometimes with such Sermons as this, yet they were worse scared than hurt. Still all things are as they were; they are very well and prosperous, they have all that their hearts desire: and therefore their hearts grow hard, and they suppose they are in no sudden danger.

In Answer to this, I shall say nothing but what is contained in the *Third* Consideration here in my Text; which is,

### III.

That all impenitent persons, as they oppose God so they, have God for their Enemy: and He will set himself in opposition to them. For He tells this Church, That if they will not repent, He will *fight against them*. Which denotes, that He would become their Adversary, and  
look



look upon them as Rebels, nay as irreconcilable Enemies: who will never submit to His Divine Government; which is concerned therefore to destroy them. So that these impenitent Wretches, who go on resolutely in their sins, notwithstanding all that He can do to reclaim them, gain but little by the patience and lenity of God towards them; and it is but a small comfort that He doth not presently strike them: seeing it is certain, as the Psalmist expresses it, that *He is bending his Bow, whetting his Sword, and preparing for them the instruments of death.*

Of this I need not say much, nor will the time permit it. It is sufficient to know, That sometimes the deferring of Execution is a piece of hostility; and makes the blow heavier when it comes. They are but treasuring and heaping up to themselves wrath, against the day of wrath, (as the Apostle speaks, ii. Rom. 4, 5.) who will not be led by the goodness of God, no, nor His Judgments to repentance; but proceed to adde sin to sin, till a most terrible vengeance break out upon them. Which may be deferred perhaps from time to time, but with no other design than a great Prince hath, who is so powerful that He can have the better of his Enemies when he will; and therefore forbears to fall upon them not because he means to spare them,

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them, but only because he waits for an opportunity, when he may do the more terrible execution, and take the severest revenge on those whom he intends to ruine. What do sinful men mean then to provoke the Lord to jealousy? *Are they stronger than He?* Will you not fear Him, because He doth not instantly smite? Shall your hearts be set in you to do evil, because Judgment is not always speedily executed against an evil work? Will you dare to offend Him, as if He could not, or presume upon Him, as if He would not punish? Let me tell you, He is the more to be feared and dreaded, if you understood your selves, for this forbearance. He delays to strike, not because He cannot; but because He can when He pleases: not because He will not; but because He will do it at such a time, when it will most serve the Wisdom of His Providence. We are ignorant of all the reasons, why God doth not do with all, as He doth with some. We know not for what causes they are, that He doth not come so quickly to reckon with one wicked man, as with another. It is enough to affright us out of our wicked ways, to know that He looks upon such persons as His Enemies; and that He will take the fittest season to come and wound the head of his Enemies, the scalp of him that goeth on still in his

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*his trespasses.* For that is the last Consideration

IV.

That such persons as will not repent, being so often admonished, so patiently born withal, so lovingly chastised and corrected; must expect nothing but the execution of all our Lords threatnings against obstinate Sinners. So He saith, *I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.* For the understanding of which Phrase, you must look back to the first Chapter of this Book, *vers.* 16. where Christ is represented as having a *sharp sword*; and that *two-edged*, going out of *his mouth*. The mouth it not the proper place for a sword to be in, which uses to be girded to the thigh, or, when it is unsheathed, to be taken into the hand. By this Phrase therefore is described the gracious method of our Lord Christ; who threatens before He strikes. His sword at first is only in his month; that is, He declares his vengeance which He will take against the rebellious; and makes Proclamation that He will come and destroy them, if they do not repent. But if these threatnings and denunciations of vengeance do not prevail; if, notwithstanding all his declarations, they contemn His authority, and will not

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not stand in awe of Him as their Lord and their Judge : He will proceed to do as He hath said, and *fight against them*, as He tells us here in my Text, with this sword, which before He threatned should come upon them to cut them off. Now no man *fights* with a sword, but it is in his hand : and therefore these words can signifie nothing less, than that the punishments He had threatned and solemnly denounced should fall upon hardened Sinners ; and that He would execute what He had resolved and make good his word, if they took no heed to the warnings He had given them.

Know then, all ye that go on fearlessly in your evil ways, notwithstanding all that we can say from God unto you ; that you shall not always hear the mere thunder of terrible words, the sound and noise of wrath and damnation hereafter, of blood and war, of plagues and tumults and subversions of Churches and Kingdoms here (that is, the sword will not always be in his mouth) but you shall feel in the conclusion the strokes of his heavy displeasure ; and He will make you know by dismal effects, that His words are not light and vain, which vanish into Air ; but they remain in everlasting force, and shall all be fulfilled.

Now this *Sword* being *two-edged*, which cuts  
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on both sides, his fighting with it, may denote the execution of his threatnings both upon the Bodies and upon the Souls of his Enemies : whom He punishes oftentimes in their outward, as well as in their spiritual estate.

I.

For the *first* of these, Those words are very terrible, which you meet withal in our Saviours Letter to the next Church, *ver. 21, 22, 23.* of this Chapter, *I gave her space to repent of her fornication, but she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a Bed, and them that commit Adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her Children with death, and all the Churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts, and I will give unto every one of you, according to your works.* Which if we apply to our selves, we cannot deny but that we have been already in *great tribulation*; and what further punishments the righteous Lord hath reserved for us, except we repent, we are not able certainly to tell : but this is sure, that it is not likely there should be any peace to such a wicked people. Our sins are so crying, that they will not suffer us to be quiet, but give us further disturbance, till they have utterly confounded us : unless we will part with these troublers

blers of our *Israel*, and become more obedient Christians. There have been innumerable Sermons preached, and Books printed to demonstrate this truth; That all those sins which are now so rife among us, *sloth and negligence, luxury and excess, whoredom and adultery, perfidiousness and dishonesty, infidelity or indifference in Religion, contempt of all Government Civil and Spiritual, &c.* naturally tend unto (and can end in nothing else but) the subversion of those Families, and that Kingdom and Church wherein they reign: besides that the Divine Justice is concerned to punish them, and will be avenged, as the Prophet speaks, of such a Nation as this. And who is there that doth not see, there are instruments of Divine Justice ready at hand, bloody instruments, that offer themselves to be employed and are prepared to do the execution, if our repentance do not move Him, by some miraculous Providence, to prevent it? The Papists I mean, the sworn Enemies of our peace and settlement; who, as they want no will so, have behaved themselves as if they thought they did not want power to destroy us. Men of as wicked principles, as the Father of mischief can invent: of no Faith, no Justice, no Charity, no Moderation (if they be spirited by them, who now rule in that Church)



Church) but inflamed with a false zeal for God and Religion; which will let them stick at no Cruelty, no Butchery, no Treachery or reasonable attempt, to compass their desired end. We may say of them as David doth of his enemies, v. *Psal. 9. There is no faithfulness in their mouth, their inward part is very wickedness: their throat is an open Sepulchre, though they flatter with their tongue.* And xxxviii. 19. *Our enemies are lively, and strong: they that hate us wrongfully, are many in number. So many, and so industrious and desperately bent to seek our ruine, that if the Lord had not been on our side, they had swallowed us up quick; when their wrath was kindled against us.* And we may be sure it is not quenched, but rather more incensed by this disappointment: So that we had need, with serious repentance, earnestly beseech Him, in the words of David elsewhere, xvii. *Psal. 13. Arise, O Lord, disappoint them and cast them down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is a Sword of thine.*

Which words teach us, That the wicked are one kind of *Sword*, which my Text may speak of, wherewith the Lord fights against impenitent Sinners: whom He punishes very often by other Sinners like themselves. And there is no sort of punishment that doth such dreadful execution, as the fierceness of man; if

the Lord do not restrain it. We have reason therefore to cry, in the words of *Jeremiah*, (which we may apply to this business) *O Sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? Put up thy self into thy Scabbard; rest and be still,* *xlvii. 6.* Let us see no more wars, no more bloodshed, no more sheathing our Swords in one another Bowels. But then we must add, as it there follows, *How can it be quiet, if the Lord have given it a charge against us; and if here He hath appointed it?* If He resolve this way to punish us, there is no way to escape it (but by repentance) and we cannot imagine how sore a punishment it may prove: for the tender mercies of the wicked (saith *Solomon*, *xii. Prov. 10.*) are cruel. Which was never more verified of any sort of wicked men, than of those Jesuit-ed Zealots, who are now enraged against us, and hate us, as *David* speaks, *xxv. Psal. 19.* with cruel hatred.

We cannot tell yet how they intended to have treated us now, but we know what they intended, and what they did in former times. Particularly in the Year 1588. when *Don Pedro de Valdez*, a great Commander in the Spanish Invasion, confessed to the Lords of the Council (who examined him after he was taken, What meant those Whips of Cord and Wire

Wire wherewith their Ships were stored) that they intended, if they had prevailed, to have whipt us Hereticks to death. This he answered in a bold manner; and being further asked what they would have done with our young Children, replied as boldly, *All above seven years old should have gone the same way with their Fathers: the rest should have lived; only we would have branded them in the Forehead with the Letter L, signifying Lutheran; and reserved them for perpetual bondage.* This the Relator (Dr Sharp) takes God to witness, he received from two of the greatest Lords of the Council after his Examination: with a Commandment to publish it to the Queens Army which lay at *Tilbury*, in his next Sermon.

It may be objected indeed that this was only an insolent rant of one of those huffing Foreigners; who intended, as he professed, not only to subdue our Nation, but to root it wholly out: and there cannot be, you may fantasie, any so barbarous among our selves, that design such a total destruction of us they call Hereticks. To which I have nothing to say but this, That the ordinary Discourse of Papists here in former times, hath been as bloody and cruel as can be imagined: and we have little reason to think they have less venome now, that they have more power by the encrease of their numbers.

For I find these words in an Exposition upon  
 2 Thess. iii printed fifty years ago,  
 \* John Squire, by a famous Preacher in the City  
 Sermon. V. Page 138. of London, Know we not their common  
 threatenings? What they whisper a-  
 mong the Common People, what they will do when their  
 day doth come? (Christ grant that their day may never  
 come.) When it shall come, do they not whisper that  
 they will no more hew down the branches, but tear up  
 the very roots of the reformation, rooting out every  
 Professor thereof? Which agrees too plainly with  
 what we read in a late Traitors Letters con-  
 cerning their hopes now to extirpate that pesti-  
 lent Heresie (as they miscall our holy Religion)  
 which hath spread it self through these Northern  
 Parts of the World. Nor have their practices  
 been unsuitable, as the Irish Rebellion alone suf-  
 ficiently testifies; wherein three hundred thou-  
 sand souls were sent to the other World, as not  
 fit to live in this; for no other cause but their  
 Religion: and it is manifest they then intend-  
 ed to have left none remaining in that Coun-  
 trey but themselves; if they could have satis-  
 fied their blood-thirsty desires.

Which things I remember for no other end,  
 but to awaken you to a serious repentance of  
 those sins, which have brought us near the brink  
 of the like destruction: lest the Lord deliver

us, at last, into the hands of these Tormentors. Whose tyranny is so insupportable, that should they prevail, the Posterity of them who now wish for that woful day, would sadly repent of it in future times; and curse the memory of those who brought them into such slavery. Let them but read the complaints and hearken to the groans of their Forefathers under the Roman bondage, before the Reformation of Religion; and they may be convinced of their folly, or madness rather, in desiring and endeavouring to return unto it. All the World sighed for deliverance from it, particularly France and Germany, and Poland, as we find in the publick Acts of those Countries: who said of the Bishop of Rome's tyranny, as St. Peter did of the burthen of Jewish Ceremonies, that it was a yoke which neither they nor their Fathers were able to bear. And among all the authentick Records (to use the words of him that set out the Review of the Council of Trent in our language) which there are of the Popes Usurpation, there are not to be found more woful Tragedies of his tyranny, than such as were acted upon our Stage. No higher Trophees erected to his ambition, than here in England. No more rare examples of devout, abused patience, than among us. Till extream necessity



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‘cessity made us despair into courage and fortitude; when the avarice and exactions of Rome having left us nothing else, at last robbed us of our patience. All our Histories are full of proofs of this; which may ease me of the labour of relating any of them: nor is this place so proper for it.

II.

Let me pass rather to the *second* thing, and turn towards you the other edge of this Sword which my Text speaks of: which is the executing his threatnings against the souls of the impenitent; and sending upon them spiritual judgments. Which if we have any sense and feeling, we must think are the most grievous of all other: And here I might represent to you, what a dismal thing it would be, if you should have your eyes put out once more; and be buried again in the darkness of ignorance and Popish Superstition; being robbed of your reason, and made to believe the grossest absurdities: and having no liberty left to examine any thing, be forced to follow blindly, whithersoever your blind Guides will lead you. For this is the least you can expect, if our inveterate enemies prevail over us. Suppose they should be so kind as not to kill us, nor torment us, nor so much



much as imprison us; yet they will undoubtedly exercise the greatest severity against our Religion; and endeavour to destroy that, though they should spare us. The holy Scriptures must be imprisoned; your understandings and spirits intralled; the Worship of God profaned and corrupted, the Idolatry of the Mass erected; the very Doctrine of repentance poisoned; and all other ways of serving God, but according to their Superstition, absolutely prohibited.

We may suffer our selves to be abused, if we please, with fair words and plausible speeches, wherewith they deceive the hearts of the simple: but whatsoever they say, and petition for themselves, when they are under Hatches; they are resolved, when they have power, to give no toleration to any Religion but their own. Thus Ribadeneira (the famous Writer of the life of Ignatius the Founder of the Jesuits) labours to prove at large in his Book of a *Christian Prince*; 'That it is impossible for Catholicks to  
'unice with Hereticks in a firm bond of Socie-  
'ty, and to agree to live together in a peacea-  
'ble, quiet Body of a Commonwealth (which  
is worthy our notice and remembrance, and so  
are his Reasons.) 'For how can one carry a  
'Serpent in his bosome, saith he, and not be  
'ulcerated

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ulcerated by his bitings? or touch Pitch, and not be defiled? *etc.* Nor are there more innate and inbred enmities between the Wolves and the Lambs, than there ought to be between Catholicks and Hereticks? No, saith he; the Council of Toledo determines, That no King hereafter should reign, but before he ascended the Throne, he should swear, among other things, that he would permit no man who was not a Catholick to live in his Kingdom, *etc.* And if this be not sufficient to shew what these Fathers would be at, (who now are the ruling men in that Church) I might cite others, who make it equally dangerous to have two Religions in a Kingdom, and to have a Wife and a Whore in one and the same Family.

Sometimes indeed they confess the iniquity of the times (as they speak) may be such, that a Prince of their Religion may be forced to tolerate ours; and solemnly do it by compact and agreement. But then they say again, That he being compelled unwillingly to fall into a guilt, must not willingly fall into another, by confirming what he hath done, when he hath power to break the agreement. And they have devised several ways to free such a Prince from his obligation, when he thinks fit to null what in words he seemed to establish: but I shall  
not

not trouble you with them ; nor should I have said any thing at all of this, had it not seemed to me necessary to inform you, That *whatsoever they may seem to give you with one hand, they have devices artificially and cunningly to take away with the other.* Whereby they justifie what Father Deza said in a Sermon of his in praise of their Founder Ignatius. Who was the mighty Angel, he told them, that S<sup>t</sup> John saw in the x. Rev. 1. *who came down from Heaven clothed with a Cloud, and a Rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as the Sun, &c.* And enquiring why he was represented as clothed with a Cloud, makes this answer ; that it signifies that he hides and conceals his generous and sublime counsels and designs : and represents also the Government of our Society, which manifest their effects, but hide their rules and their modes or manner of acting. As of old, saith he, a Cloud covered the Tabernacle of the Lord, and the Glory of the Lord entered into it : so God who hath built this Tabernacle on Earth (he means the Society of the Jesuits) hath with the same wisdom ordained, for the preserving the honour of so holy a thing, *ut ejus gubernandi ratio adeo secreta esset*, that the reason and manner of its Government should be so secret, that no man should be able to know it.

Which I think you see verified to the full at this day. We feel the effects of their Counsels, but we see not the secret Springs by which they move. They are covered with a Cloud indeed, and cast a mist before peoples eyes, by a number of cunning distinctions, crafty evaluations, and secret reservations: wherein they instruct their Profelytes, that they may be able to do the most villainous things; and yet not be seen, but lye concealed from the eyes of the world, even when they are caught, and many evidences are produced of their wickedness. *O my Soul, will every one here be apt to say (with good old Jacob) come not thou into their secret, unto their Assembly, my Honour, be not thou united, xlix. Gen. 6.* But it is not enough to pray against their artifices; we must take a more effectual course, by true repentance, to engage the wisdom of Heaven on our side, to defeat their most crafty and subtile contrivances. Else we may be cozened and gulled out of our Religion, if by outward force they cannot prevail against us, and return in time to our old blind devotion: according to the observation of S<sup>t</sup> Stephen, that when the Israelites would not obey *Moses*, then in their hearts they turned back again into *Egypt*; and then God turned and gave them up to worship the Host of Heaven.

But

But suppose none of these things should befall us; but we should keep our Religion: what shall we be the better for it, if we do not repent? Nay, how much the worse shall we grow, by the abuse of his abundant Grace, and so many remarkable deliverances from our Enemies, which we have received? There are other spiritual evils, that He hath threatned to inflict upon the impenitent; and are the sorest wounds, the sharpest punishments, that He can give with this *Sword of his mouth*. They are such as these, *the withdrawing of his Grace, the taking away his holy Spirit; and consequently ceasing to move their hearts unto repentance; denying them the helps they have had, and putting no such stops to them in their evil courses, as sometimes they have found: but removing those things which might excite and stir them up to amendment; and on the contrary permitting such as may confirm them in their contumacy, whereby they become hardened, and sealed up unto condemnation; to be punished with everlasting destruction, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels, to take vengeance on all those that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of Christ.*

These are sad and dismal things, which should stir up every one of our drowsie hearts, to mark and observe and lay hold upon every

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good motion of God's good Spirit in our hearts unto repentance: lest it depart away from us, and by degrees leave us insensible, utterly insensible of the things belonging to our peace. Which, one would think, should be so dear to us (though we look no further than this present World) that we should readily consent to any thing that will procure it; and set our selves against that which obstructs it, and will finally undo us. And that we all confess is our heinous sins; For all the power of the Devil and of Men, though never so violently bent against us, cannot destroy us; unless we continue still in the Plot, as I may call it, wherein we are engaged too deeply against our selves; by our wilful persisting in prophaneness, filthiness, contempt of Religion, and of that Authority which supports it; and such like sins: which have brought us into that low, that weak and contemptible condition; in which our enemies could never have hoped to have seen us, unless they had first debauched us.

That hath been their great craft, as it was *Balaam's*; to whose devices my Text hath a particular respect. He saw clearly there was no way to prevail against *Israel*, but by engaging them in *Idolatry* and *Irreligion*: and that there was no way to engage them in that, but  
by



by enticing them to *Fornication*. So the *Samaritans* excellently gloss upon his Story\*: who introduce *Balaam* \* *Apud Hotting. Smegma Orientale, p. 444.* telling the Princes of *Midian*, That the holy Angels surrounded *Israel*, and the King of Heaven and Earth was with them: so that neither Magick, nor any thing else, could prevail against them; unless they admitted some infidelity, or committed some grievous sin. Then, said he, the Creator will be angry with them, so that they shall perish, and not one of them remain. For the accomplishment of which, he advised them to send the most beautiful Women in their Country among them, every one of them with the Idol which She worshipped, in her hands: and that She should offer her self to be theirs, if they would eat of her Meat, drink of her Drink, and worship her God. This was *eating things offered to Idols*, mentioned before my Text; whereby many of them perished; and the rest were saved, who severely punished these enormities, and thereby shewed their hatred and detestation of the wickedness of their Brethren.

After which pattern Christ expected the Church of *Pergamus* should be severe against all those among them, who were seduced  
from

from the Christian purity in Doctrine and in Manners, by the like artifice of the Devils Agents. Whereby he knew he should put them out of Christs favour; and if they continued in those wicked courses, quite unchurch them, and bring them again under his vassalage. This is the *Repentance*, which Christ here calls for in my Text: and which He requires of all Governours and those in Authority Civil or Spiritual; that they should not be slack in punishing sin, and suppressing all false Doctrine, and especially those lewd opinions which lead men to all manner of looseness and wickedness.

For, if you observe it, the Church of *Per-gamus* had been stedfast in the Faith in the time of persecution, and when *Antipas* his faithful Martyr suffered, were a commendable people in many things (as we likewise in this Church, at least our Forefathers, may be commended for this, that in the days of Fire and Faggot, many chose to dye rather than to change their Religion.) But there were a few things which Christ had against them. *First*, Because they had those among them, who held the Doctrine of *Balaam*, &c. and *Secondly*, Those who held the Doctrine of the *Nicolaitans*: who were another sort of filthy people; giving themselves over  
unto

unto promiscuous lusts of uncleanness. When He saith, *They had such among them*, He means they connived at them, and did not eject them : For it was not their fault, that those men held such opinions ; but that they suffered them without the censure of the Church. And then immediately He addes, *Repent, or else I will come against thee quickly, &c.* As much as to say, You must suffer these men no longer among you ; (that was their repentance, at that time) or if you do, I will not endure it ; but will come and punish you for this indifference in Religion.

Now I leave you all to judge, whether the Factors of the evil one, have not taken this very course to unchurch us ; and we by our negligence be not in the way to unchurch our selves. They have infused poysonous principles into mens minds, and taught them, for instance, to decry Marriage, as a foolish slavery, to think Fornication an innocent thing ; and so to give up themselves to commit all uncleanness with greediness : that so, forgetting all respect to our Religion, they may in the issue make them Romanists, and profelyte them to their Idolatrous Services ; that is, make them ten times more the Children of the Devil, than they were befoe. And what other way

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is there to be saved from the destruction which these and other vices will bring upon us, but (that which we are not willing to take) for every man to repent of his own wickedness and turn to God : and then for those who have authority, to set themselves with all their might to punish and to root out such wickednesses, with all the principles that lead unto them, together with the Abettors and Supporters of them ?

And here it may be fit to observe, That a *few things*, if very destructive to Religion, may provoke the Divine severity against a Church. For they were no more, that Christ charges this Church of *Pergamus* withal ; and yet, if they did not amend, He threatens to come and fight against them with the Sword of his mouth : What will become of us then, whom He hath so many things to charge withal ; if we go on still to provoke Him with them to jealousy ? I doubt we cannot clear our selves from such filthinesses, as are here mentioned ; nor from foul Doctrines leading to them, which too many have entertained ; nor from coldness and indifference in Religion, if not plain infidelity ; nor from a disposition of heart in some to turn back to *Rome*, the spiritual *Egypt*, again ; nor from conniving at the defection which so many have made from Christ's true Religion here established, and not endeavouring

endeavouring to suppress all those that seek to destroy it. And which is still more, we are foully guilty of slighting that Authority, which should call men to an account for all their wickedness; and not only reprove and rebuke, but censure and chastise, and exercise Christs Discipline upon notorious Offenders. This is a thing not only laugh'd at and despised; but hated and scorned: nay, the Ministers of Christ themselves are but lightly esteemed. For which, if there were nothing else, we may be sure Christ will reckon with us.

Reckon with us, did I say? He hath done it in part already; and yet we are not cured of this malignant humour: which makes me fear the saddest part of the reckoning is still behind. Take the Prognostication in the words of a great Doctor of this Church \* : \* Dr. Jackson on the Creed, Book II. Chap. 9. who thus denounced God's Judgments against this Nation, a good while before the late Wars, upon this very account, That he saw the people running headlong into this great sin; which is marvellously encreased since that time.

Questionless, saith he, this open, malapert, scoffing disobedience, to all Ecclesiastical Power, now openly professed by the meanest, and countenanced by many great ones of the Laity, is the sin which (to all that

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know Gods Judgments, or have been observant to look into the days of our visitation, cries loudest in the Almightyes ears (more loud by much than the Prayers of Friars, Monks and Jesuits do) for Gods vengeance upon this land. For vengeance to be executed by no other than our sword, in veterate, malicious enemies; by no other grievances, than by the doubled grievances of the long-enraged Romanists iron-yoke: which is now prepared for us, ten times more heavy and irksome than that was, which our Forefathers have borne.

And I pray God this do not prove a true Prediction. If it do, we cannot say but we were forewarned; and that Gods Watchmen discharged themselves, and told us beforehand of the danger. Which we had better prevent, by becoming more obedient to their godly admonitions; by submitting to their just censures; by esteeming them very highly for their works sake, and giving them all due encouragement to do their duties sincerely. And though some be negligent, and idle, or ignorant, let not either the baseness or the tenderness of any of their persons, tempt you to despise their office: For that's the reason (in that Doctors opinion) why God sends no better men in many places. God knows, saith he, for whose sake it is; but we may ascribe it especially for the infidelity and disloyalty of this people towards Him, and for their disobedience



ence to his Messengers; that He sends them such idle, foolish and lewd Pastors, as they have in many places.

Because the Laity of this Land are so prone and headstrong to cast off Christs yoke, and to deny due obedience to his faithful Ministers; He therefore sets such Watchmen over them in many places, as they shall have no lust to obey, in any thing that they shall propose to them; but harden their hearts in infidelity and disobedience. Which, I have shewn you already, is one of the most fearful Judgments, that God can inflict upon us; and which we ought to dread, more than the enraged Romanists iron yoke; which, he saith, is prepared for us.

It hath been preparing many years; and it seems now to have been very near to be clapt, when we thought not of it, upon our necks. It is a Miracle of Gods mercy that it was not. But let not that make us too confident, that it shall never be laid upon us; nor fancy it is quite broken in pieces, because we are slip from under it at present. For if our shameful disobedience to the Gospel, and contempt of its Ministers still continue, (notwithstanding that they are acknowledged to be much better now in most places, than when that Doctor wrote) I fear we do but feed our selves with vain hopes of an absolute deliverance. Or suppose He

will not let them be the Instruments of that punishment, which our sins deserve (because they of that Church are so exceeding wicked; so void, that is, of all faith, truth and honesty; so perfidious, malicious and cruel: and all under a colour and pretence of Religion; which warrants all these things, and makes them the more abominable) yet assure your selves He will find some other way, to execute the Judgments He hath threatned to the impenitent. There is some likelihood He will take them in their own craftines: but let not the hope of that tempte you to be secure; for He will destroy us too, in our impudent disobedience, and hardness of heart; which will not be moved by any thing to come to repentance. No, not when we our selves acknowledge that we expect mercy and deliverance from Him, upon no other terms. For so we constantly pray, in the Collect for deliverance from our enemies: where we first acknowledge that to Him it justly belongs to punish Sinners, and to be merciful to them that truly repent: and then desire Him to deliver us from the hand of our enemies; to abate their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices. Unless we repent, we here confess that we have no reason to expect his salvation; but rather such punishments, as He justly inflicts upon such Sinners, as will notwith-

standing go on still in those trespasses, whereby they see, they are in danger to perish inevitably.

Let me once more therefore beseech you, as you love your souls, as you love your Religion, your Lives, your Liberties, and all that is dear to you; examine and search and try your selves by the infallible test of God's most holy Word: lay your hearts to that Rule while you have it; and resolve by God's gracious assistance, to bring them to a sincere conformity with it.

Especially let all good men (whatsoever the rest are pleased to do) apply their endeavours to purifie themselves more perfectly, to walk more circumspectly, to shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse Generation; and to cry mightily unto God for his sparing mercy. It is possible they may be saved, though He punish others. Nay, by their importunate cries unto Him, and sollicitous prayers, day and night, for this poor Church and Kingdom, they may obtain some respite of his Judgments, and prevail for the putting them off till a further time: if they cannot quite avert them.

*Ahab's* humiliation, you know, procured this favour: And therefore if all, both King and people, did this day imitate him, so far as with great sorrow and affliction of Spirit to acknowledge

ledge their offences, earnestly beg pardon, cry for mercy with strong and constant importunity, and reform some notorious sins (though not all of which we are guilty) it might prove a prolonging of our tranquillity. Nay, it is possible, as I said, that, though others continue still insensible and negligent yet, if all good people would make it their business every day to grow better, and to pray to God incessantly, that He would at least forbear us, and have patience with us, expecting still longer, if we will bring forth fruit worthy of his Gospel; it is likely they might obtain this mercy, of enjoying truth and peace in our days.

Let me speak to you therefore in the words of a pious and learned man, before the late wars.

*All ye that fear God, and tremble under the expectation of his wrath, give Him no rest, stand up in the breach, make a strong assault, as I may say, upon Heaven with your Prayers; give not over till you have received a gracious answer: till the sins of our Nation be pardoned, his imminent Judgments averted, his ancient favours recovered; till He have rebuked Satan, and trodden Him under our feet; till He have frustrated the bloody hopes and desires of the enemies of his Truth; till He build up the breaches, raise the ruins, and bind up the wounds of his Zion: Saying with Daniel, O Lord God, we have sinned and committed*

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*mitted iniquity, &c. yet compassion and forgiveness is  
with Thee, O Lord: and therefore we beseech Thee,  
hear the Prayers of thy Servants, and their Supplica-  
tions; and cause thy face to shine upon this Church,  
for thy Names sake. O Lord, hear; O Lord, for-  
give; O Lord consider, and do it: defer not, for thy  
own sake, O our God: for thy Name is called upon us,  
and we are thy people.*

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**THE END.**

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Fast-day, April xi 1679. 25

inwardly, O Lord: and therefore we beseech Thee,  
bear the Prayers of thy Servants, and then Supplican-  
tions; and cause thy Spirit to shine upon this Church;  
for thy Honour sake. O Lord, hear; O Lord, for-  
give; O Lord, consider; and do it: deliver us, for thy  
own sake, O our God: for thy Name is called upon us,  
and we are thy people.

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THE END.

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A.  
**S E R M O N**  
 P R E A C H E D  
 On the Late F A S T,

DEC. xxii. 1680. Afternoon.

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Rev. III. beginning of the *third* Verse.

*Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard,  
 and hold fast, and repent.*

**T**HE *sad and calamitous condition* of this, once most happy, Church and Kingdom, is so great and so visible, that it can be no longer dissembled: but we must confess with the Prophet *Isaiah* (in the first Lesson for this Morning Prayer, i. 5.) that *the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, &c.* which hath moved his Majesty (by the desire of his Parliament) to cause it to be proclaimed to all his people; that we may be awakened to look about us, and see how we may prevent

the dreadful Judgments which are now impending over us.

That which hath occasioned this deplorable state of things is (as we are told in the Proclamation which called us hither) the impious and horrid Conspiracies of a Popish Party; who have not only plotted and intended the destruction of our Sovereign, the subversion of the Government and Religion established among us; but still obstinately prosecute their intentions, notwithstanding Gods most wonderful discovery of their wickedness.

And one of the ways whereby they carry on this design, being (as we are there also informed) by fomenting divisions among our selves; these are no less to be bewailed by us than any other thing whatsoever: both as a calamity, and as one of those sins, those most grievous and many sins; which must be acknowledged to be the main cause of all our dangers.

And they are so great, that, in humane reason, they can by no other means be remedied, than by the special hand of Heaven. Which we come therefore here to implore, in a particular blessing upon the consultations and endeavours of the great Council of the Kingdom; and in defeating the wicked counsels and devices of our enemies; and uniting the hearts of all his Majesties loyal Protestant Subjects.

But

But these great Blessings we cannot reasonably hope to obtain, no not by our Fasting and Humiliation and Prayers; unless we endeavour a true reconciliation with God: by being unfeignedly penitent; and resolving to forsake those sins, which we our selves confess have brought us into such distresses and perplexities, as nothing else can remedy.

Now in order unto this, As I excited you, on the last Day of solemne Fasting and Prayer, to a serious and speedy Repentance; by such Arguments as I found in those words of our Saviour, to another of the seven Churches of *Asia*, ii. 16. *Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and fight against thee with the sword of my mouth:* so at this time I shall direct you a little in the way and method of repentance; and point at some things of which you are to repent: from these words which I have read out of our Saviour's Letter, to the Church of *Sardis*; with whom we of this Church have too manifest a resemblance.

For as our blessed Lord complains (*ver. 1.*) *we have a name that we live, i. e. are good Christians: but alas! in deed and truth are dead;* for we produce not the fruits of Christian vertue. There is a great deal of bustle and stir about Religion, for which we seem to be mightily concerned: but the inward life and power of it

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is generally wanting, which we do not love to be troubled withal. Nay, we can scarce say so much of our people as God doth of *Judah* in the first *Lesson* for Evening Prayer (lviii. *Isai.* 2.) *They seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a Nation that did righteousness and forsook not the Ordinances of their God, &c.* (which alas ! we have most openly deserted) though this was far short, we find in that Chapter, of making them an acceptable Nation to him. At the best we must confess we are fallen asleep and grown very slothful, as our Saviour here supposes (*ver.* 2.) them of *Sardis* to have been : and there is so great and universal a decay of true piety and goodness among us ; that we are in apparent danger to lose the small remainders of it. Something good there is still left in this Church, as there was in that : but far from that intire and compleat obedience, which our Lord expects from us ; as will appear by considering what is to be done by us, for our recovery to a better condition.

And there are *three* things which our Lord here requires of them in my Text : and are incumbent upon every one of us, as our necessary Duty, if we would be saved from our present danger.

First,

*late Fast, Decem. xxii. 1680. 61*

First, *To remember what they had received and heard.*

Secondly, *To hold it fast.*

Thirdly, *To repent; of their forgetfulness, I suppose, their looseness and indifferency in their Religion.*

I shall treat of them all in the order wherein they stand: and consider them, both with respect to the condition of that Church, to whom they were first delivered; and then with respect to ours, who have no less need of such admonitions.

I.

The *first* of them supposes, That they had been taught some Doctrin: which they had *received* and entertained with belief; and had *heard* it also often since inculcated and pressed (so I understand the words) by those Pastors who were set over them by the Apostle, or those who first delivered the Truth unto them. Which was nothing else but the *Christian Religion*; of which I must not here speak at large; but only tell you, It is *that way of serving God, which is prescribed by Christ and his Apostles, in the Books of the New Testament.* Wherein we now read; what they then *received* by word of mouth from the Apostles;

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Apostles ; and understand fully what we must believe and do to be saved.

Now as there is no cause to which God more frequently ascribes the sins, and particularly the Idolatry of the Children of *Israel* ; than their *forgetfulness* of Him, and of his Law, and of what He had done for them : so this very thing (stupid forgetfulness and neglect of what Christ and his Apostles delivered, by Signs and wonders and mighty deeds) introduced that deadness in Religion, of which our Saviour complains in the beginning of this Chapter ; and He foresaw would bring in all the corruptions which afterwards followed in the Church, and began very early to appear in the Christian World. For there arose *false Apostles* and *false Prophets*, nay direct *Antichrists* (as this very Apostle S' *John* tells us) men who denied the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that brought in damnable Heresies, sleighted the authority of the Apostles, turned the Grace of God into lasciviousness ; nay, brought back the old Idolatry, as you read in the foregoing Chapter of this Book, *vers. 14. 20.*

And though this Church of *Sardis* is not charged with so deep a degree of Apostasie, as those of *Pergamus* and *Thyatira* ; yet there was great danger of falling into it, unless they took  
this



this advice of our Saviour, to *remember* (better than they had done) what they had received and heard. Which is the very same with that, which God himself had given of old to the Israelites, to prevent their defection from Him, (in many places of the Book of *Deuteronomy*, viii. 1, 2, 18, &c.) and which his Prophets were wont to give, in after times, as the first step to their recovery, when they had revolted from God their Saviour, xlv. *Isai.* 8, 9. vi. *Mic.* 5. Who here calls upon his Church in like manner, to bring to remembrance, and think again and again, till they had fixed it in their mind, what they had received; and with what affection also they had embraced the Gospel of God's Grace (for that may be implied in the Particle *now* how you have received and heard) as the only means to preserve them from lapsing farther into a worse condition, and losing that good which was still remaining, but ready to dye among them. This the Apostles afterward endeavour'd with great care and diligence, and promised as we read in *St. Peter* (2. i. 12, 13, 15.) to endeavour that after their decease, they might have those things in remembrance always, which they had been taught: But for want of the like diligence and watchfulness in the people (who did not take such heed as they ought to have done.

done to these admonitions) the Christian Religion, in process of time, was so adulterated, that a great part of the Church fell into that lamentable apostasie, which is foretold and described in this Book of the *Revelation* : and which we see now fulfilled too plainly in the Church of *Rome* and those of its Communion.

Which have so far degenerated from the primitive Christianity (such is the mischief of not reflecting perpetually, upon what was first delivered and received) that their Religion looks more like the old Paganism, revived in a new shape ; than that good old way of worshipping God, which our Saviour taught, when He came to destroy the works of the Devil. And they were still plunging themselves further into such gross Superstitions, as endangered the very Being of Christianity, (by magnifying the *Blessed Virgin* and *St. Francis* to such a degree, that they were regarded more than Christ himself) that a Reformation became absolutely necessary ; and was generally desired, as it were easie to shew, by men of the greatest note, in these parts of Christendome, for choise learning and piety.

Nay, in that very Council, which they themselves packt to hinder the Reformation (that of *Trent* I mean) Ten several Kingdomes and  
States

States, desired both by their Ambassadors and Prelates, That the *Cup in the holy Communion* might be restored to the people: from whom it had been sacrilegiously taken; to the manifest violation of the Christian Religion, which had instituted it in both kinds. And many pressed for *Divine Service in a known tongue*; the want of which was another palpable corruption, and shameless abuse in the Roman Church. Which many desired might be reformed in other Particulars: but nothing could be obtained from them who were resolved to baffle all these pious endeavours. In order to which, they took such a course, that there were more *Italian* Bishops in that Council, who would vote as they were directed (sometime more by *twenty*, sometime by an *hundred*) than there was of all the World beside. So that, in effect, all these Parts of Christendom would have reformed, had not *Italy* opposed it; and craftily combined by all manner of artifices to hinder these honest intentions.

Which, blessed be God, prevailed notwithstanding in this Church: and were so zealously and yet so prudently prosecuted, that we were happily purged, by the singular Grace of God to us, from all those corruptions, which had infected the Body of Religion; without the loss of any part of that Truth, which was an-  
K ciently

ciently and at first received. For when we reformed, we did not set up a new Religion, as they falsely and foolishly accuse us; but only cast out their novel errors, and reduced all things to the ancient Standard or Rule of Faith, and Worship, which *was once delivered to the Saints*; that is, to the Church of Christ. As will appear by applying all this to our selves, and remembring you, as briefly as I can, what it is, that we received, and have often since heard, to be the true Doctrine of Christianity, as it stands reformed from the corruptions and abuses of the Roman Church.

1. Which is no other than that, which the Church of *Sandis* and all the rest at first received; The fundamental Principle of our Religion being this, That all things necessary to be believed and done for the obtaining salvation, are contained and plainly enough expressed in the holy Scriptures. A Compendium of which, as to matters of Faith, is drawn up in the Apostles Creed (as it is explained by the famous Council of Nice) which comprehends all things that are necessary to be believed, in order to eternal life.

2. Yet we acknowledge that it is not sufficient, as you have often heard, to believe: but though our sincere profession of Faith, according to what is revealed in the holy Scriptures,  
and

and comprehended in the Creed, do enter us into the state of Justification ; yet the fruits of Faith in a godly life, are absolutely necessary to continue us in it. For that very Faith which justifies us, doth imply and include in it a purpose, and is accompanied with a promise of holy obedience : Which if it be not performed, we cannot be accepted with God, nor claim the promise of eternal life.

This is another Principle, which we have received.

3. And among the rest of the duties which are required of us by our Faith, the holy Scriptures teach us this, as plainly as any whatsoever ; That Christian People ought to have a great regard to their Pastors ; the Guides and Conductors of their Souls in the way to Heaven : whose spiritual authority over them is to be revered ; though not as infallible, yet as most valuable ; not to be followed blindfold, but fit to be consulted on all occasions, and most to be relied on in dubious cases.

There is no principle of the Reformation more undoubted than this ; That a Pilot is not more necessary in a Ship, or a Shepherd to watch over the Flock, than such spiritual Shepherds and Guides are to teach, direct and govern Christ's Church ; and that among other

means and helps which Christian people should use to understand the Scriptures, the direction of their Guides is the chief. To whom it belongs, as to receive men into the Church by Baptism, so, after they are thus born again, to breed them up in their Religion, as their spiritual Parents; to expound and interpret to them the holy Writings; and out of them to instruct the ignorant, convince Gainayers, correct the peoples mistakes, reprove their sins, stir them up to all the Duties of a holy life, satisfy the scrupulous, censure the contumacious, absolve the penitent, and administer comfort to dejected Spirits.

The people indeed ought to examine, whether the things they deliver out of the Scripture be so or no (as the *Beræans* did and are commended for it, xvii. *Acts*) and conscientiously to discern between truth and falshood, between the right faith and rule of life propounded to them by their Pastors, and the poysoned Doctrine of Hereticks and Deceivers: But they must not judge alone, without their direction and guidance; nor hastily conclude their Teachers to be in the wrong; nor rashly dissent from them and refuse to follow their direction; but rather suspect themselves, and enquire further when they think they ought not to assent



to them; and in the issue, if the things they deliver be not plainly against the holy Scriptures, to suspect their own judgments, rather than contradict those, whom God, without all doubt, hath appointed to be their Instructors and Guides.

By which principle we have quite shut out the Roman tyranny on one hand; who would lead the people blindfold, whereas we endeavour to make them see, and require them to open their eyes, and show them that we do not mislead them: and avoided also, on the other hand, the wild frantick liberty of those, who will not be led at all; but go alone, and guide themselves by their own private judgment. As by the other principle also (of sticking to the Scriptures in all things necessary to salvation) we have cut off all the fond Traditions of the *Roman Church* (which they have equalled with the Scriptures) and yet have retained many things of ancient observation, which were not absolutely necessary, but not sinful; for peace and decency sake. Because we would not seem to have undertaken the work of Reformation, out of any desire of novelty: but merely to discharge our duty to God; in avoiding all things contrary to his Word, and doing all according to it. Which made our Reformers,  
for.

for the preservation, as much as was possible, of peace and unity (which the holy Scriptures so much commend and enjoin) to take great care, not to depart any further from any practice of the Church; than it had departed from Christ the Founder of it, and from the holy Scriptures whereby it ought to have governed it self.

Thus I have, in as few words as I could, told you what it is that we have *received*. From whence we may learn, both how happy we should have been, had we always stuck to it, and never deviated from it; (so happy, that we should neither have had the Divisions that are among us, nor any thing else which we come this day to bewail) And also how foully the Roman Church hath prevaricated and departed from the simplicity of the Christian Religion; *First*, By adding many other Articles of Faith, to those which were at first received; and *Secondly*, By forbidding the people to look into the holy Scriptures, which contain the foundation and rule of Christian belief.

Let me touch a little upon these two; leaving the consideration of our own condition till afterward.

*First*, I say, It is apparent they have highly offended God, and abused his people, by making a new Creed, and that contrary to a known

known Decree of the third General Council (that at *Ephesus*) which they pretend to reverence. For It ordained that it should not be law-ful for any person to bring forth, write or compose, any other Faith than that which was defined by the holy Fathers, gathered together in the Holy Ghost, at the City of Nice: and that whosoever should dare to compose or offer another Faith, or propound it, to such as were desirous to be converted to the knowledge of the Truth, either from among the Gentiles, or the Jews, or from any Hereticks; they should, if they were Bishops or Clergy-men, be deposed from their Office; if Lay-men, be anathematiz'd. And yet they of Rome have not feared to violate this Decree, by making a new Faith; not in words merely, but in sense: about the adoration of Images, of Saints, of the Eucharist; and concerning the Authority of the Pope, the Doctrine of Purgatory; and the rest of the Articles of the new Creed, presumptuously made by the Council of Trent.

Some of which are of such dangerous practice, that learned men among themselves (*Gerson, Espenceus*, and others) have confessed it, among the vulgar, to be no less than Idololatri-cal: and others doubt not to adde that it is no better among the learned. And others again are so far from being Articles of Faith, that for ought we can find in the Scriptures (or  
true

true Antiquity) they are not so much as probable opinions. For instance, the *Authority of the Pope*, and the *Monarchy* (as now they fear not to call it) which he pretends to over the whole Church; is founded merely in pride and ambition; and as it was acquired, so it hath been supported and enlarged (and is still maintained) by rebellion, treason, murdering of Princes, wars, dispensing with perjuries and incestuous marriages, spoils and robberies of Churches and Kingdoms, worldly craft and policy, force and falsehood, forgery, lying, dissimulation and gross hypocrisie; as may easily be made good in every particular, to the satisfaction of all those, who have not their eyes blinded by the God of this World. Who by such villainies hath mightily disgraced Christianity: which for many Ages was wholly unacquainted with any such Faith.

And there are also common opinions that pass among them uncontradicted, as strongly believed as any Article of Faith; which, notwithstanding their seeming zeal for good works, utterly overthrow any necessity of them. For it is the avowed Doctrine of the greatest Teachers in that Church, That though a man live and dye without the practice of any Christian Vertue, and with the habit of many damnable sins unmortified; yet if he have sorrow for sin, and joyn Confession with

with it, and receive absolution in the last moment of his life, he shall certainly be saved. And accordingly we see, that if the lewdest persons among us will but be reconciled to the Roman Church on their death-bed; they abuse them with the hope of salvation: telling them there is no salvation in our Church, though they were never so good; but in theirs there is, though they are never so bad. Which is a clear demonstration, That all their discourse about good Works is a mere show; and that Faith alone among them is thought sufficient to do the business; and that it is *their* Priests, not *Ours*, who teach men to rely upon a naked Faith, and presume to be saved by it.

The cause of all which is their neglect of the rule of Faith, the holy Scriptures; which are so much against them, that they dare not trust the people with them.

Secondly, That's the *second* thing I noted, as a manifest declaration of the corruption of the Roman Church; that they will by no means consent the people should look into those Books, which contain the Doctrine at first received: but upon the severest penalties, forbid (without a special Licence obtained) their perusal of them; as if these were the most suspected or dangerous of all other Books; or as if it were rea-

on the people should believe the Church, without knowing what the Church ought to believe.

There is not a more evident token of their guilt than this. For that it is done on purpose to keep the people in ignorance, not to preserve them within the bounds of sobriety (which may be done by other means) is apparent from hence: that even those select portions of Scripture, which they have chosen to be read in the Church publicly; they will not let the people hear in a language which they understand. For which no reason can be alledged, but that now mentioned, they are loth the people should be acquainted with any thing, that may enlighten their eyes to see the errors of that Church. For *Latine Prayers* indeed, wherein they speak to God, they have this excuse, That God understands all languages: but for *Latine Chapters* of the Bible, wherein God speaks to men, there is nothing to be said; the end of speaking to others being that we may be understood. Why then should God be as a Barbarian to his people, speaking to them in an unknown tongue? And why should those things which in other cases would be held ridiculous, and contrary to common sense; be esteemed good and convenient in Religion? Without all doubt



doubt such things as these are the sport of the Devil: who hereby hath expos'd Christianity to scorn, and both kept the people from being instructed by God their Saviour, and delivered them up to be most grossly abused by evil men.

For this mischief is not single, but hath bred and brought forth another; they having set up the device of entertaining the people with *Images*, which they call the Books of the Ignorant (and are the means of keeping them in ignorance) instead of the holy Scriptures, which are able to make men wise to salvation.

For all which the holy and reverend Name of the *Church*, and its infallibility, is used for a colour. By which they mean only the *Roman Church*: which being but a particular Church, not the universal, is become Judge in her own Cause: and maintains she does well, nay cannot erre; because she says she cannot do otherwise. There is no man, who will take the liberty to consider, that can think this the way of salvation. No, it is the manifest method of perishing without remedy; for any thing that the people of that Church can know. For they, being taught simply to believe in the Church of *Rome*, and to depend wholly upon its authority, without any other enquiry, can never be satisf-

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sed whether this Church, wherein they believe, teaches the true and pure Doctrine of Christ Jesus, the Lord and Spouse of the Church. For they are deprived of all means to find this out; being forbidden to look into the holy Scriptures, where Christ hath delivered his mind unto us. *All the Faith therefore of the poor people of the Roman Church, is no other than a humane Faith; being grounded wholly on the authority of men: and of all humane Testimony they rely upon the most uncertain, viz. that which they give of themselves.* For they believe their Church to be good, merely because She says so: that is, make her judge in her own case, which is like to produce the most partial Judgment of all other.

But it is time to leave the consideration of their faults in this thing: and, as the duty of this Day requires, to reflect seriously and impartially upon our own. Which we shall the better do, when I have a little opened the *second* general part of my Text; wherein we shall see how happy we of this Church might have been; if we had *held fast* that which we have received.

II.

For that follows, you see, in the Charge given to the Church of Sardis, *Remember what thou hast*

*hast received and heard*, and HOLD FAST; or keep to it; observe it and take care to do accordingly: For that's the end of calling things to mind; that we may not depart from them, if they be of consequence to our happiness.

Such was the Doctrine at first delivered by Christ and his Apostles, and (to apply it wholly to our selves) such is that which we have received; being the very same, as you have heard, with that at first delivered. Which we ought therefore to keep most sacredly, and to stick to it stedfastly; never, in the least, warping from it; nor turning aside, either to the right hand or to the left, from the principles and rules of a Religion, which is so well grounded; that it stands upon the undoubted word of God our Saviour.

For, as I have shewn you, the Religion which we have *received and heard*, is no other than what the holy Scriptures (which all acknowledge to be the word of Truth) teach us to believe and practise.

And is a Religion so sincere, that it teaches the people to read the holy Scriptures; because it is not afraid they should therein read its condemnation: And for that end propounds the Scriptures to them in their own Language; because it is not in the least ashamed of any thing

it bids them believe, nor unwilling to be laid to that rule of righteousness, and examined by it.

A Religion also which, in reading the holy Scriptures, bids the people content themselves with that which they find there clearly and evidently delivered (for that it assures them is sufficient for their salvation :) leaving things obscure for the exercise of the learned ; and things not drawn from thence, but from uncertain Traditions, or private Inspiration, to superstitious and fantastical Persons.

A Religion which doth not make Faith consist in ignorance, but in knowledge : and yet to keep this knowledge within the bounds of sobriety, directs and enjoyns all private persons to take heed to the publick Ministry of the Church ; and all publick Ministers to study the Scriptures diligently, and to teach nothing to be religiously held and believed (as one of our ancient Ca-

nons is \*) *but what is agreeable to the Doctrine of the Old and New Testament, and which the Catholick-Fathers, and the ancient Bishops have collected out of that very Doctrine.*

It is a Religion also, which doth not teach us to rely upon Faith alone; but presses the necessity of good works, far more than the Roman Church

\* 1571. Tit. Con-  
cionatores.

Church doth, whatsoever they falsely pretend: only it teaches that God rewards all the good we do, out of his own free mercy, without any desert.

And therefore, instead of framing and fashioning Wood and Stone into the Images of men; and setting them up for the people to worship; it exhorts men, by all means possible, to study to frame themselves after the Image of God in righteousness and true holiness: and to conform themselves to those excellent patterns of Vertue which the Saints have left us for imitation.

Instead also of worshipping the Sacrament, it teaches us to worship the Lord Jesus Christ, in the holy and reverend use of the Sacrament: not using it to make Jesus Christ; but to honour Him; not to make His Body descend from Heaven to us, but to lift up our hearts to Him in Heaven; not to turn the Bread and Wine into the natural Body and Blood of Christ, but into the spiritual nourishment of our Souls. For it doth not think that Christ and the Devil both entred into *Judas* together; or that our Saviour did eat Himself; or hath ordered matters so, that He may be carried away by a Mouse, and eaten by his greatest enemies.

It teaches none of these or any such like absurd and incredible things; nor doth it interrench  
upon

upon any man's civil Rights. But though it bid men reverence and obey their spiritual Pastors, yet doth not place any of them above Kings, nor exempt them from their jurisdiction; much less ascribe a power to them of disposing them from their Thrones, giving away their Kingdoms, and exposing them to be murdered (which the proud Bishop of Rome challenges) but humbly and meekly declares, as *St Paul* doth, That every Soul (even the greatest Apostle, as *St. Chrysostome* interprets him) must be subject to the higher Powers.

What shall I say more? It is a Religion which acknowledges no other supreme Head of the Church, but Jesus Christ; no other rule of Faith, but his Word; no propitiatory Sacrifice, but his Death; no Purgatory, but his Blood; nor any merits, but his obedience to God in all things.

A Religion therefore, which hath little of outward pomp and show; but much of inward substance, life and power: which ordaineth few Ceremonies, but ministers abundant instructions and consolations: which attributeth little to distinction of meats, but prescribes fasting and abstinence from all meats whatsoever; and that for an exercise of humility and other Christian Vertues, without any opinion of merit or satisfaction.

And



And it may be added, That it is a Religion to which the very Papists themselves are indebted several ways, for their ease from many burthens. For it is our Religion, which hath quite spoiled the Trade that was driven by *Indulgences*; which was so shamelessly exercised before the Reformation, that Sellers of Pardons went, like Pedlars, from house to house; and for half a Crown offered to let any man have a remission of all his sins, and the delivery of a Soul out of Purgatory. Which was the thing that first stirred up the just indignation of *Luther*; to whose honest zeal they are beholden for deliverance from that imposture. They are not abused neither as formerly with new *lying Miracles and Apparitions*: which are seldom pretended now (thanks be to our Religion for it) in comparison with the many illusions of this kind in former times. They are free also from being perpetually pillaged by divers grievous *exactions*, which their Forefathers in this Kingdom (I could shew you) complained of as insupportable. Nor do their people run with Offerings from one Image to another, so fast as they did before our Religion let them see their follies. To say nothing of their *Crusado's* and other things, which it is not easie for the Pope himself now to gull them withal. Which is to be put in-

tirely upon the account of our Religion : which hath opened many of their eyes to see more errors among them, than they are willing to confess.

Have we not reason then to *hold fast* such a Religion as this, so as neither to part with it, nor to depart from it? If truth had the same power over the will that it hath over the understanding ; we could never suffer our selves to be guilty of either. Nay, the Papiſts themſelves would condemn their own madneſs, for endeavouring to diſturb this Religion ; and to bring back that authority hither, which made ſuch Fools of them.

But alas ! it is too notorious how little hold our Religion hath taken on our hearts. There being ſo many who have revolted if not openly, yet in their hearts and affections (we have too much reaſon to fear) unto the Romiſh deluſion. And others (I am afraid the moſt) who have *retained* what they *received*, only in part : but let go a great deal of it ; to the open diſgrace, maniſeſt damage, and almoſt undoing of our Religion.

Which is the thing I muſt now admoniſh you of ; in the laſt part of my Diſcourſe upon theſe words : wherein our Saviour calls upon the Church of *Sardis* to *REPENT*, of their  
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*late Fast*, Decem. xxii. 1680. 83

not *holding fast* (that is) *what they had received*. And so must I now call upon you with all earnestness ; it being the particular business of this Day, and the only thing that can save us from perishing in the Pit which is digged for us by our Romish Adversaries, who have been long plotting (and now have almost effected) our destruction. Yet I shall not expatiate through the whole Doctrin of repentance : but confine my self only to such things, as relate to what hath been already spoken.

III.

You are not now to learn what it is to *repent* ; but only what it is you should *repent of* : that is, be heartily sorry for, and amend.

And this also is soon known ; if, in obedience to this admonition, you will but reflect upon what you have *received and heard* : and then consider what conformity your practice holds therewith. And here let me deal as plainly with you, as becomes my Office, and the solemn business of this Day, and the present distress of this Church and Kingdom : which should awaken all men of sense to examine themselves upon these *three Heads*.

*First*, What esteem is remaining among us of the holy Scriptures ; in which are contain-

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ed, as you have heard, all our Religion.

*Secondly*, What fruits our Faith hath brought forth : which the holy Scriptures tell us God expects from us ; and are so necessary that we cannot be saved without them.

*Thirdly*, more particularly, What the behaviour of the people of this Church hath been, and is, towards the Pastors and Guides of their souls : with whom God hath principally intrusted his holy Oracles.

If all the Members of this Church, would thoroughly examine themselves upon these Heads, they would find, I fear, too much matter for *Repentance*.

I.

For the *first* of these, I shall omit the disrespect (to use no harder word) of one whole Sect of men to the holy Scriptures (which they have in a manner laid aside, and only accommodated the Phrases of it, to that which they call the light within them) and touch upon such things only as are common to all Parties among us. In which,

1. We cannot but fear (and with grief of heart it ought to be spoken and considered) there are great numbers who have no value for the  
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the holy Scriptures at all: but have quite forsaken even Christianity it self, which is therein delivered; some the very belief of it, and others the profession. This is one of the fearful sins of this Age; which cries for vengeance against us: and hath encouraged this Plot to bring in *Poperie* (that is, *Idolatry and Tyranny*) among us. Which durst never have shown their heads here again, if they had not been emboldened by our Irreligion. And though now we seem to be stirred up to oppose them; yet no Religion will be found an unequal match for some Religion: which though a very bad one, is better than none at all.

2. And *secondly*, It cannot be denied that abundance of those, who still, blessed be God, believe the holy Scriptures, yet have lost that high esteem and affection which our pious Ancestors had for them. Or if they have any, it doth not appear by their diligent reading of them; which many have laid aside. Time was, when they were read and studied with great care and fervent desire, in the beginning of the Reformation; when every Body that could read, had them in their hands; and some had a great deal of them by heart, as the Jews now generally have the principal things in the Old Testament. But alas! this ardour soon re-  
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mitted : and now is in a manner extinct.

*Musculus*, I remember, complains heavily of it, in his Preface to the Book of *Genesis*, many years ago ; and we are not grown better, but much worse, I fear, since his days. ‘ And what other cause, saith he, can we give for it, but this ; That the greatest part of those who seemed to have given up themselves to the Truth of God, busied themselves in the Scriptures ; not that they might be better by framing their lives according to that rule ; but that they might be able to dispute, and to carp at the old errors and superstitions ? And so some ran into all manner of wickedness ; others lickt up their old vomit ; others leaving the manifest Truth turned to new Sects, which sprang up ; and others became neutral, and fell into perfect indifference : whereby they were disposed to receive any Religion ; which the great men of this World should be pleased to set up, by their Authority.

Which sad Complaint, with much more that there follows, I wish we had no cause to renew in this Church : and had not lost our first love to our Saviour, and to his holy Word. Which being disgraced by the means forementioned, better people have been infected with such a negligence ; that few read the holy Scriptures,

as



as they were wont heretofore to do: but live, as if they believed the Papists say true, That the reading of the Scriptures is the cause of all the mischiefs that are befallen us. Nay, the publick reading of them in the Church, is not so reverently regarded as formerly it was, and as it ought to be. For there are those that never mind what is read; but look upon that as a vacant time to gaze about them; or to whisper and discourse what they please one with another. In times past, good people were wont to bring their Bibles along with them hither: but that now is worn out of use, or so little practised, that it looks as if they were as much ashamed of it, as to appear in an old fashion, which is held ridiculous.

Let such things therefore be amended, I beseech you, if you mean to save your Religion from being destroyed by our Romish Adversaries: whom we have highly gratified by these things, and invited to plot our ruine. Let all men among us become serious Believers; and shew that they are, by reverencing and reading the holy Scriptures; by frequenting the holy Assemblies, and there duly attending to them; by growing truly more knowing in the ground and foundation of our Religion; and taking such care to be acquainted with the Scriptures;  
that

that this may not be our condemnation, that they lay open before us, and were put into our hands, in a language we could understand; and yet we despised them, or would not mind them.

## II.

The mischief of which is apparent; For if we proceed to examine our selves upon the *second* Head, we shall find a most lamentable account either of our ignorance, or negligence, or wilful disobedience. For who doth not see, that the *Fruits of Faith* are so much wanting, that we are in danger to perish; merely because there is so little integrity, so little common honesty remaining among us; but so much falseness, lewdness, filthiness, and sottish debauchery, as have made men so beyond measure dull and stupid, that it hath given our Adversaries hope, they were disposed to receive any Religion. Nay, they who are better enclined, have been too careless in the Divine Service; too frozen in their Devotion; and not solicitous enough in the mortifying their unruly affections and passions, in bridling their tongues, and *adding to their Faith* all those Graces, about which St. Peter requires us to *give all diligence*, 2 Pet. i. 5, &c. And yet the Grace of the Gospel teaches

us so plainly *how to walk and to please God* ; that it is a wonder every Body does not look upon a holy life, as the most necessary part of Christianity. For nothing is there so earnestly pressed as this, which is most lacking among us : who live (as it follows there in *St. Peter*, ver. 9.) like *blind men*, or (which is all one) *that cannot see a-far off*, (nothing at a distance, but merely that which is held before their eyes) *having forgotten that they were purged from their old sins* : do not reflect, that is, upon what was done at their Baptism ; but (as if they were not able to look so far back) wallow in their filthiness which then they solemnly renounced.

But this is too large a Subject for a particular Discourse ; and therefore I must leave it to your own private examination and search ; whether you have not relied too much (contrary to what you have received and heard and professed) upon a naked Faith, and the merits of our Saviour ; without that care which He requires, to make your Faith work by love to God and to your Neighbours. And here there are as many sins to be repented of, as there are Christian Duties to be practised ; if we have been negligent in any of them. And if we will not amend, but still continue to be *barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ* ;

with what reason do we expect that He should be pleased with an idle Faith; which doth us no good? and not rather look for that doom, which was pronounced upon the empty Fig-Tree; *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?*

## III.

For the preventing of which dreadful Sentence, I must call you to repentance, for one most dangerous sin, contrary to our Faith and Christian Profession: which I fear too many will find themselves guilty of, if they will but be at the pains to examine the state of their souls, upon the *third Head*, viz. *The demeanour of the people, towards their spiritual Pastors and Guides, in the way to salvation.* Towards whom there are a great many pious persons, it must be thankfully acknowledged, who still preserve in their hearts and behaviour, that due regard, which Religion and reason require. But it must, on the other hand, be bewailed, that there are vast numbers, among all sorts of men, who do not only sleight them; but have shaken off the yoke of obedience to them. Which is the thing above all others, that hath made the Papists so audacious; and will certainly, if it be not amended, bring in Popery at last among us.

Be

Be not offended, I beseech you, if in a time when plain dealing is so necessary, and in a matter of such great consequence (as I apprehend it) I be so bold as to tell you; that there are those who oppose themselves so senselessly, as well as arrogantly, to all spiritual Authority; that this Doctrine of obedience to it they call Popery. Which is a foul reproach to the Reformation; an Apostasie from its Principles; and a casting off the direction of the holy Scriptures: which require such obedience as we preach. For we do not bid men follow any Guides, but such as take God for their Guide: that is, guide themselves and the people, by the Word of God. If we did go about to hide that from the peoples eyes, and hinder them from reading it; it would be an evident sign that we knew our selves to be reprov'd by the Scriptures; and that instead of submitting to that Rule, we would make our own authority to be the supreme Rule: which is the crime of the Roman Church. But there is no colour for any such charge to be laid against us; who exhort, who press the people to be diligent in reading the holy Scriptures: only we desire them, as the Scriptures themselves do, that they would take along with them the assistance and direction of those, whom Christ hath appointed to guide their judgment.

Without which direction men may easily see, if they please to read them, what a high crime it is to despise; and much more to revile and rail at their Authority. And yet some have proceeded thus far in their opposition to them: nay, deny they have any Authority at all.

The woful effects of which we see, as in other things so, in the Divisions that are among us; which have opened a Gap for Popery, and we all fear will bring it in. But we will not see, as we ought to do, that all those Divisions have sprung from this other Cause; and still are maintained and widened, by the general contempt of those, whose Guidance ought to be religiously observed: which if we will not regard, as God commands us, we shall inevitably run our selves out of our Religion. For our Divisions (which this Day we come to lament) we all confess will do the business, if they be not cured. And of all the ways of Cure which are now thought of, we seem resolved to wave the principal, if not the only way, of Gods own prescribing. The method of which I shall faithfully and plainly lay before you: that thereby you may judge what is like to become of us, if it be neglected.

We all grant, I believe, that the right means to avoid or to remedy Contentions and Divisions



in the Church, are as clearly set down in the holy Scriptures, as any Rule of life whatsoever. For otherwise, they would be extreamly defective in that thing, which is most necessary, for the preservation of the Religion which they teach.

1. Now if you search the holy Scriptures, with never so little diligence, you cannot but observe there is a Duty frequently inculcated of reverence and obedience to Christs Ministers : which if the people will not pay, (according to the evident meaning of such places, as I shall mention anon) it is impossible that the Society of the Church should be kept in unity ; but must necessarily break in pieces, and be dissolved.

2. We must add indeed, That the Ministers of Christ ought also to take special care, to be such wise and faithful Stewards in Christs household ; that the people may be inclined with the greater forwardness to obey their directions. For which end their Duty is no less plainly and amply set down in the holy Scriptures ; and such extraordinary caution is given by Saint Paul about the admission of persons into holy Orders ; that were his directions sincerely followed, and did the people, as He enjoins, adhere unto them in hearty love and esteem of them.

them for their works sake ; there would be a marvellous encrease of Christian knowledg and goodness, without that strife and contention which now blasts them both.

3. But if Princes do not make such good choice, as they ought, of spiritual Governours ; or if those spiritual Governours, by their negligence, ordain worse inferiour Ministers : yet the Authority of ordering or reforming things, doth not, by devolution, come to the people ; nor will this justify their disobedience to them. But their Christian Duty is as manifest in this Case as in any other ; which lyes in these two things. *First*, They ought to fall the more earnestly to their Prayers ; both for their King ; and for all in authority under him, especially their spiritual Pastors. The Scripture enjoyns both ; and the gross neglect of both, is one cause things are no better among us. What other meaning is there of those words of the Apostle, *1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. I will that supplications, &c. be made for all men ; for Kings, and for all in Authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty ?* And why doth the same Apostle frequently desire the Church would be *helping by Prayers for him*, (who needed them less than we do) but to teach all Christians how earnestly they should recommend those to Gods guidance,

guidance, who are to guide them? Read 2 Cor. i. 11. vi. *Ephes.* 19. and other places.

And if they find that their prayers are ineffectual; there being no amendment in those that should take care of them; their Duty (*Secondly*) is to examine seriously, and lay to heart the cause why they cannot prevail: and a little consideration will teach them, that, in all likelihood, it proceeds from their own sins, who deserve no better Governours and Pastors. For (as the Prophet speaks in the next Chapter to the second Lesson for Evening Prayer, lix. *Isai.* 1, 2.) *The Lord's hand is not shortened, that He cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that He cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God; and your sins have hid his face from you, that He will not hear.* And for what sins do you think, it is more probable, that God is angry with us in this Nation, and will not hear the prayers of this people; than their disesteem of Christs Ministers (even of the best of them) their contempt of their Office; their proneness to disobedience; nay their scurrility and scoffing at all spiritual Authority; and such like sins, expressly forbidden in Gods holy Word? With which this Church, alas! abounds a great deal more, than with supplications and prayers to God for them. All are more forward to find fault

fault (if not to rail and revile) than to beseech God of his infinite mercy, to give them Pastors after his own heart : or to examine their own Consciences how they have provoked God, by their unprofitableness, at least, under the best means of Grace that He hath bestowed upon them.

4. But let us suppose further, That the Governours and Pastors of the Church, are not only negligent ; but exceed the bounds of their Authority, as it seems to the people, by enjoying things which they take to be unlawful : yet this will not warrant their contempt of their Authority, and their casting off all obedience to them. But *two* things are to be considered ; Whether they be certain the Commands of their Governours are unlawful ; or they only fear they are. In the first Case indeed, they ought not to be obeyed in such things ; but by the peoples care to obey in all others, which they judge to be lawful, they ought to demonstrate that it is only respect to God, which makes them not comply in things which seem to them to be apparently unlawful. And so unity in most things being preserved, they will be the easier brought to see their errors ; on one side or other. But in the other case ; when they are not certain the things commanded

manded are unlawful (which is the common cause of all our Divisions) but only suspect them to be so; it seems to be reason that the people should not disobey a certain Command of God (which requires them to submit to their Governours) when they are not certain there is a cause for their refusal. The most that can be allowed them is, humbly to desire those Laws may be altered; or if the Rulers of the Church (who are the proper Judges of such matters) cannot think it safe to make such alterations as are desired, then barely to suspend their obedience, in what they fear is unlawful, till they can be better satisfied; but fearing withal it may prove a sin not to obey, to use all means for satisfaction: not absolutely denying obedience (much less reviling their Injunctions; or making violent oppositions to them; which commonly ends in wresting all authority out of their Pastors hands) but merely not doing for the present what is enjoined; modestly entreating their forbearance in such matters; or, if it cannot be obtained, peaceably and patiently submitting to their censures. Which, sure, would not be heavy upon such humble, modest, and truly conscientious Christians (if they should, God would judge such Governours for their unreasonable severity) but there

would rather be ways found out, to make up the difference, without taking their Pastors power from them, and governing themselves as they please. For God, I am confident, would enlighten the one or the other; to see either their error in enjoyning, or in not obeying.

5. And this that I have said, is the least that can be meant in such places of Scripture as these, *1 Thess. v. 12, 13. We beseech you, Brethren, to know (that is to love) them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you. And to esteem them highly in love for their works sake: and to be at peace among your selves. (Which they could not fail to be, as long as they kept close to their spiritual Instructors and Governours.) And xiii. Heb. 17. Obey them that have the Rule over you, and submit your selves; for they watch for your souls, &c. And 1 Pet. v. 5. Likewise ye younger, submit your selves unto the Elders.*

Where first observe the name given to the Pastors of the Church, viz. *Elders*: which imports an Office and Authority in the language of all Nations: and here in *St. Peter* implies so high an Authority in the Rulers of the Church, that the Apostle supposes more danger of its growing too imperious, than of its being slight-  
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ed and disobeyed. For he requires the Elders to feed (that is govern, as well as teach) the Flock of God, not as Lords of Gods heritage, but being ensamples to the Flock, ver. 2, 3. Which Caution against domineering, and Lording it (as we speak) had been idle; if the power of the Pastors, and the obedience due and paid then to it, had not been so great, that it might easily grow extravagant: such was the reverence they had to their Persons, and deference to their Judgments, and submission to their Authority.

For the word *submit* you may observe further, is the very same whereby he expresses (in the *second* Chapter, ver. 13.) the obedience he would have them give to Kings and those in Authority under them. And therefore cannot signifie less, than that their directions ought to be followed, and the Flock ruled by their Orders, in all things where God hath not ordered otherways; and that they should be afraid to offend them by disobedience, and much more by shaking off subjection to them, and denying their Authority.

6. Which includes in it a power of ordaining and constituting the manner of performing the Service of God according to His Word: which requires that *all things be done decently and in order*,

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1 Cor. xiv. 40. The things themselves to be done (which that place speaks of) are many of them specified in that very Chapter ; and the rest in other parts of the holy Scripture : but the decent manner, form and order how they shall be done is no where particularly defined there. And therefore, though by virtue of this Precept no Body hath power to form new Articles of Faith, new Objects of Worship, new Sacraments, &c. (wherein the Church of *Rome* hath abused her power) yet the substance of Religion being thus prescribed in His Word, the order, disposition, form and manner of doing the Duties of Religion, is left hereby to be determined by the wisdom of the Governours of the Church, according to the general Rules of the holy Scripture. Which they cannot indeed enact into Laws, binding by civil penalties ; yet no Christian Magistrate (to whom that power belongs) ever denied them a directive power in making Rules for the Government of the Church, or at any time made them without them ; but always took their advice in such matters. For who so well able to tell, as they, what is most consonant to the Scriptures, profitable for their Flock, and agreeable to what hath been practised in the Church of God. Which always taught (and it is as  
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undoubted a principle of the Reformation as any other). That where the holy Scriptures have not given particular directions for the decent performance of the Duties, they call for (as it was impossible they should for all Cases, Times and Countries) there the Ministers of Christ, whom the holy Scriptures appoint to be the Governours of His Church, are to draw up Orders and Rules, agreeable to the general Rule, which the people ought to observe.

And it is very reasonable to interpret the place of the Apostle before mentioned, in this manner, *Let all things be done*, first, *εὐχρηστως*, decently, or honestly; after a comely beſeeming faſhion; with ſuch Rites as will procure veneration to holy things, at leaſt ſecure the ſervice of God from contempt, and promote devotion in the people: and the way to have things done with ſuch gravity, as this word imports, is next to do them *κατὰ τὸν ὅρον*, according to order; or by the deliberate appointment of thoſe, who have authority to ordain ſuch Rites, as will become holy actions. An example of which we have in that very Chapter, ver. 32. where even ſuch as had extraordinary ſpiritual gifts, are required to ſubmit to this Order. For the *Spirits of the Prophets*, he ſaith, *are ſubject to the Prophets*. That is, there was ſuch a ſubordination

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tion in that Order of men ; that when one was prophesying, he was to cease, if a superior Prophet commanded him silence.

Which, among other places of Scripture, might silence those, who question the authority of the present Governours of our Church ; because of their superiority over other Ministers. Or it might be sufficient to make them modest in this thing, to say only this ; That Christ sure did not leave His Church without a Government, (which had been to leave no Church) and that it is incredible the whole Church, Pastors and people should agree to change His Government (without any contradiction that we can find) into this which we have, if this be not it which He left. And that I think hath been as little (nay less) questioned, as any Point of Christianity : which must needs weigh much with all considerate minds.

7. Who likewise cannot but grant , that things being thus ordered and appointed by the Authority of Christs Ministers ; those Constitutions, in all reason, ought to be obeyed by those who are subject to them ; and not left at liberty whether the people will observe them or no.

This is most judiciously handled by M<sup>r</sup> Calvin, in the *Tenth* Chapter of the *Fourth* Book of his

his Institutions ; which is well worth the reading by every Body : particularly from the 27<sup>th</sup> Section to the end. Where he bids those who gainsay this and make opposition to it, consider *how they will approve their moroseness to God. For us it is sufficient, that we have no such custom of contending, neither the Churches of God.*

8. If we be really desirous then to make peace and restore unity in the Church (which is now so necessary that we are undone without it) this is the first thing wherein we ought all to unite, in repenting of the breach which hath been made among us ; by slighting our Guides ; by casting off the Government of the Rulers of the Church, and despising, nay reviling their Orders.

I know how difficult it is to perswade men to this, because they throw the guilt off from themselves, and so confidently lay it all upon their Governours ; that it is now generally taken for granted, without any doubt, they are in fault, not the people who ought to submit to them. But a very little humility and modesty (not to say common sense) might teach us to make the favourable presumption on the side of Authority : and dispose the people to think, it is more likely that they are mistaken, than their Guides. Who ought indeed to have nothing so much in their thoughts, as how to do

do service to Christ, honour to his Religion, good to souls, by promoting sincere piety; and if they have been negligent in this, deeply to humble themselves before God, and study to be ensamples to the Flock of serious Repentance: But if they fail in this, I am sure the people can never give a good account of their throwing off the yoke of obedience to them, spurning at their Authority, and separating from Communion with them. The mischievous effects of which, if nothing else, one would think, should be sufficient to move them to Repentance.

That is, *First*, To be heartily sorry for the breach they have made; and reflect upon it as the original of all our miseries. And *then* beseech God most earnestly to forgive it; especially that open jesting, nay scoffing (which hath been so rife among us) at all spiritual Authority. Which, in the next place, let every one of us seriously acknowledge, and resolve to reverence, so as to be advised by them; and take great heed to their Counsels and Resolutions; to weigh them considerately; and not lightly and hastily to depart from them; much less rise up in opposition to them; but when you are forced by Gods Command (as you think) to decline obedience in any particular injunction, to be the more careful in observing the rest,



rest, against which you have no exception: and still to reverence their Persons and their Authority, when you cannot observe their Commands, to speak well of them, and peaceably to dissent from them; remembering that if they be liable to mistake, you are much more: and therefore ought not to *be wise in your own conceit: but to think soberly of your selves, as you ought to think.*

9. This is the way of peace, which we have received from Christ and his Apostles (and I might add all succeeding Pastors in the Church) of which I thought good to *remember you*; and to call you to *repentance* for departing from it; and to exhort all people to return into it: as the only means of our preservation; and of making the preaching of the Gospel (if God pleases to continue it) effectual for our reformation and amendment, in all other things that are amiss among us. For as no Kingdom can stand without Religion; so no Religion can stand long (no not this excellent Religion, which we have received, and I have briefly described) without a due esteem of and regard to its Ministers. In obedience to whom, even they who cannot comply with all publick Orders, will find more true comfort, and more favour also with God and men, than in any other way whatsoever.

But here is the mischief, that it is the common error of Mankind, to seek that far off, which (as the Lord told his people) is near at hand, within them, even in their heart and in their mouth. if they would be but Doers of His Word, and not Hearers only. They hunt up and down for remedies of their Distractions; but will not mind the obvious Cure, which is laid before them by God himself in his holy Scriptures. Where it shines clearly enough, if mens passions did not eclipse it from them. Which are now so great and violent, that it is a singular happiness, if any person, in this turbulent Age, can see the Divine Truth himself, in Points of greatest moment. But to cause others to see it, is a matter of such difficulty, that there is small hope of it: whilst they suffer their foul affections and passions (like a steam from a great many Dunghills) to overcast the face of Heaven, whence light should come into their souls; and evaporate that inward filth which is lodged in their hearts, in abusive language, as it were on purpose to choke the good Spirit of God, which breathes in others mouths, whose breasts God hath inspired with his Grace.

20. But this must not discourage Gods Ministers, nor hinder them from asserting their Authority :

thority : which is to rule the people, and not to be ruled by them. To which course if we will not submit (when God himself so plainly directs to it) all the ways which humane policy can invent, will prove ineffectual ; and never make a lasting union and peace among us : if they make any at all. But after mens ill affections (which they will not root out) have been laid asleep and suppressed for a time ; they will awake and break out again with the greater violence, and make worse disorders : till with the contempt of the Ministers of Religion, our Religion it self be brought into such contempt ; that, as a punishment for our disobedience to just Authority , we fall under the tyranny of those, who will use no moderation.

That's the heavy Judgment (I told you in my last Fast-Sermon) threatened before the late Wars, by a great and holy Divine of this Church (some of whose words I have used now and then in this Discourse) for this sin of disobedience unto and contempt of, all Ecclesiastical Authority. And whether this sin be not encreased and grown more audacious since that time (and consequently our danger greater) I leave you to consider and judge. Only let me tell you, That they who stand divided from us, complain of it as well as we, finding to their shame and

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grief (as an eminent man among them expresses  
 \* Mr. Baxter it \*) that we are endangered by Di-  
 Sacril. desert. visions, principally because the self-con-  
 P. 103. &c. ceited part of the religious people, will  
 not be ruled by their Pastors; but must have their  
 way, and will needs be Rulers of the Church and  
 them. The effect of which he tells them is  
 this; You have made more Papists, than ever you or  
 we are like to recover. It is you that tempt them to  
 use Fire and Faggot; that will not be ruled nor kept in  
 concord, by the wisest and holiest and most self-denying  
 Ministers upon Earth.

Which is an ingenuous Confession of the  
 guilt and the danger; we have all run our selves  
 into by this sin: and that though all the blame  
 is now laid at the door of the Rulers of this  
 Church, yet it is so unjust a Charge; that were  
 they in all points such as those that accuse them;  
 there would be no end of our troubles and con-  
 fusions; unless the people, even they that think  
 themselves most religious, will grow less con-  
 ceited, and submit to be ruled by their proper  
 Governours. It hath been said indeed, that they  
 do follow such Guides, as they think fit to lead  
 them: but here is one that contradicts it; and  
 complains of their unruliness. And besides, I  
 must add, that such Guides ought not to be  
 followed, as will not submit to be governed  
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by their Superiours : there being nothing, as I said before, so little disputed in the Christian Religion, as the Authority which the Bishops exercise over the Presbyters in the Church. And if they will not so much as give us leave to tell them of this, without incurring their censure, nor patiently bear with those reproofs which we think necessary; it is impossible they should repent of this sin, and then our destruction is unavoidable.

This part of my Discourse indeed may seem unnecessary, in an audience where I hope all of you are better affected : but it hath its use even among such, as *hold fast what they have received and heard* concerning this Duty. Who should endeavour by their brotherly reproofs and prudent admonitions, to stop the progress of this Disease, in those whom they find infected with it. Desire them to consider things calmly, and to study this part of their Christian Duty. Pray them not to be so passionately bent against the means of their safety : And that they would at least hear, what Christs Ministers can say for themselves and the Authority he hath left them. Tell them, it is impossible any wound should be healed, while the inflammation continues: And that as when a house is on fire they that  
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• speak and give the best advice cannot be heard, by reason of the noise and cries of those who are gathered about it; so we shall never understand one another as long as we are clamorous; nay have our minds violently inflamed with rancour and hatred, even against those that would cure us of it. The study of Gods truth requires a quiet and peaceable Spirit; which deliberates and weighs things, without carping at persons: and doth not presently conclude we plead our own private interest, when we plead the Cause of Christs Ministers. Who do not merely bear testimony to themselves, as they of the Church of Rome do; but appeal to the holy Scriptures, where these things are as plainly delivered, as any part of Christian Religion. • •

God of his infinite mercy touch every heart in this Nation, with a sense of them; that we may not shut our eyes against the things that belong to our peace; nor while we endeavour an union, make the most dangerous rent that ever was: But all so truly repent of this sin, that it may be a happy step to the reforming all other, that have sprung from this. Then we need not fear any evil that the Devil or man can plot against us: but while we walk in that godly order, which Christ hath appointed (the  
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people being ruled by their Guides, and their Guides ruled by God) may triumphantly say (as it is in one of the *Psalms* appointed for this Day, xlvi.) *We will not fear though the Earth be removed, and though the Mountains be carried into the midst of the Sea* (though tumults and hurlibur-lies should arise, we will not be afraid, for) *God is in the midst of this Church, She shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. Amen.*

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